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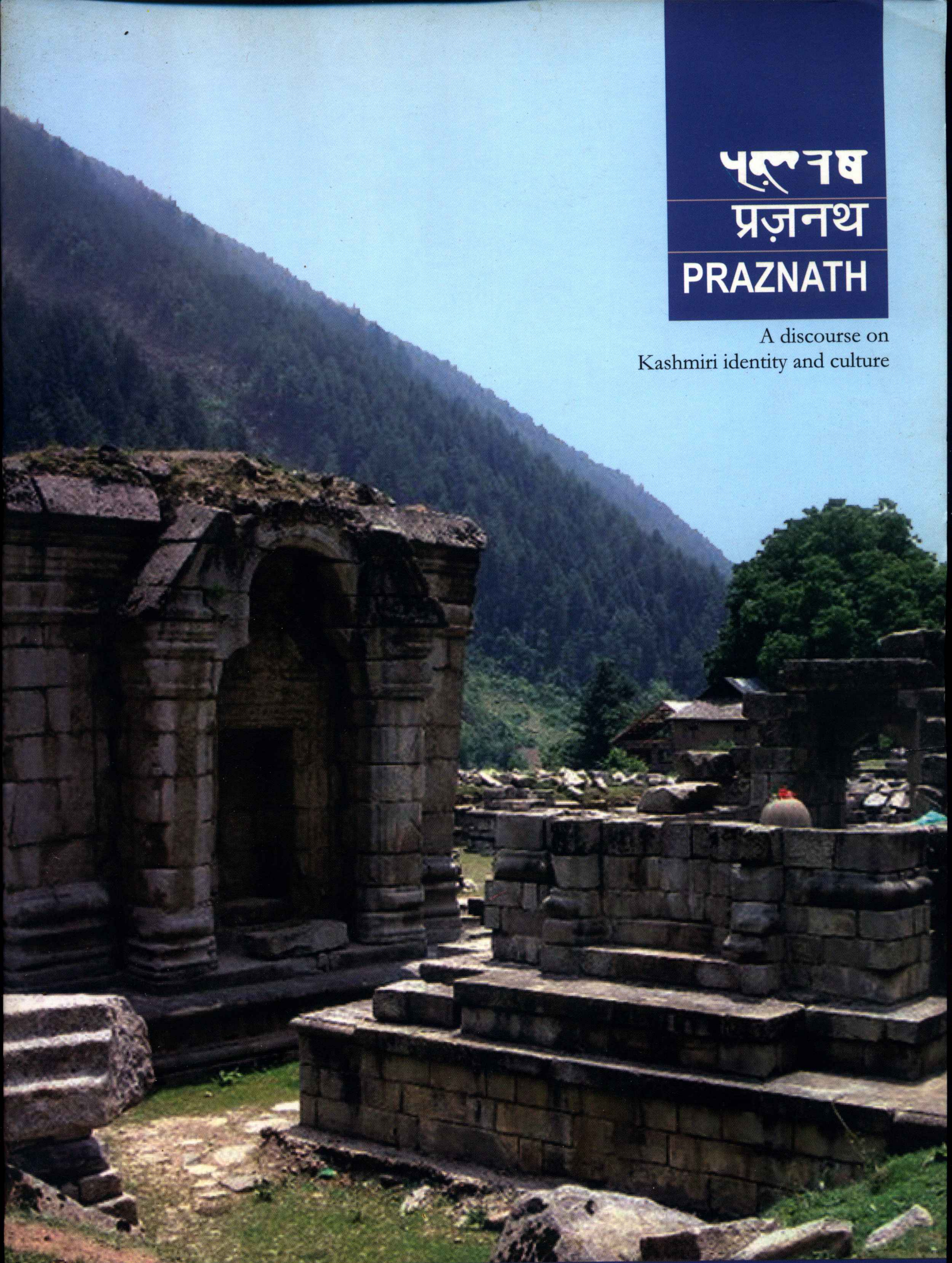
प्रज़नथ
PRAZNATH

A discourse on
Kashmiri identity and culture



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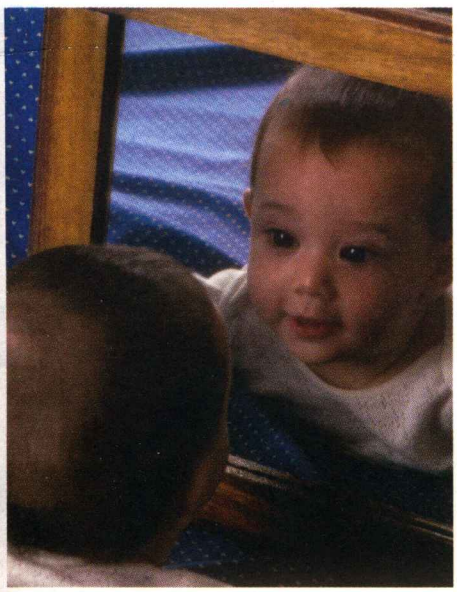

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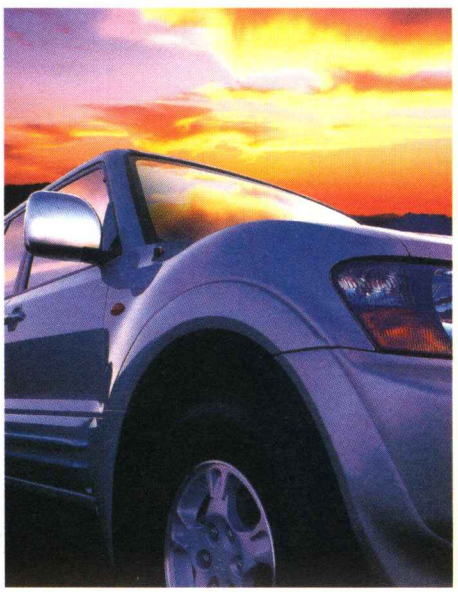

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Cover: Naranag is the modem name of ancient Sodaratirtha which was an important place of pilgrimage from early times. It contains two groups of temples. The first comprises six temples constructed within a peristyle. The principal has a square base with two entrances opposite each other in the northeast and southwest sides. It has pyramidal roof and domical ceiling. The two sides which are closed are decorated externally. The second group of temples is enclosed in a peristyle pierced by a two-chambered gateway. The largest temple has square base. There is a rectangular trough of granite to let in water of the holy spring outside. The site is located in dense pine forest 5 km to the east of village Wangath, in Kangan Tehsil of Srinagar district, on the bank of the Kanakavahini river.

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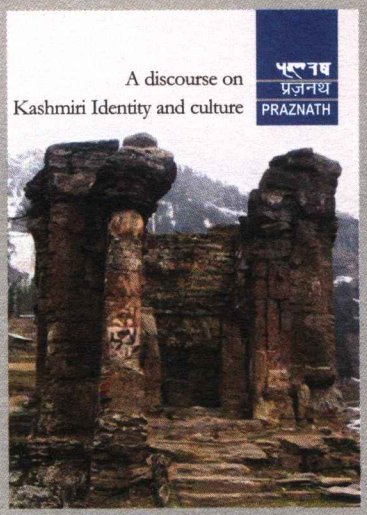


July-Sepetember 2010 issue

Dear Editor

■ 'Praznath' is a platform for the unheard voices of numerous Kashmiris forced to live away from home land – 'Kashmiris in exile' as rightly expressed by the editor. It explores various dimensions of Kashmiri identity and truly articulates the yearnings of those uprooted from their homes and those born outside Kashmir but want to know and connect.

As a non-Kashmiri, I can relate to it through various horrifying anecdotes of migration from Pakistan narrated by my grandmother with tears in her eyes. Even if physical separation has been forced, the emotional connection endures in the hearts. Imprints of days of glory are imperishable as reflected explicitly in the writings.

'Home Tourists' in the 1st issue of 'Praznath' is a heart touching narration depicting the plight of many caught in similar situation. The articles such as 'Kashmir Aestheticians and Great Debate on Indian Theories of Aesthetics', 'Kashmiri School of Painting' are very well researched which I would like to preserve for future reference.

Kanupriya Taneja, Delhi

■ Immense thanks for the publication of Praznath. As I found myself awaiting for the next volume, Praznath offers a unique dimension to the identity of the people of Kashmir that rests on the question of how we define the scopes of "identity". It demonstrates, how identity can be realized in multi-dimensional phases in a form of discourse between the people of present and the past, and encompasses possible perspectives of socio-cultural heritage of Kashmir. It is not only about the "fact" that we think we know, but it all depends on the human potency, that agent alone can reinstate our memory the Home, that the voice of "the land of paradise" can be once again heard, which will always remain within us.

Sayaka Arase, Tokyo

■ First of all accept my heartiest congratulations for such a well designed and well thought over magazine and the contents. Perhaps this is the only of its kind which talks about us, the valley and it gives us some sense of connection, even if illusionary.

The only suggestion I feel is that the magazine only talks about the past Kashmir and not the present. There is a lot happening within the community; I think that should be also covered.

To my understanding, and please correct me if I am wrong, the tentative idea that I have that this magazine is about the Kashmiri Pundit identity. For example there were some exhibitions that have happened in the recent past but none as been covered with the exception of Vir Munshi who had left Kashmir before the exodus. I think it should be our collective endeavour to talk about the migrant Kashmiris who despite the odds made a space for themselves, set trends and did a lot more.

Having said the above, I still believe what you are doing is really commendable. Once again congratulations.

Hriday Kaul Bharti, Ahmedabad

■ When is Praznath coming? I found PRAZNATH the best Kashmiri magazine till date in all respects, especially the content. Even my dad liked it very much! The only issue is the delay in its publication.

Varad Sharma, Jammu

■ It is such a delight to read Praznath.I must congratulate the entire team of Praznath for bringing out a high quality magazine.One of the most outstanding features of the magazine is that it delves into the much neglected period and thought of Pre-Islamic Kashmir. I was particularly impressed by the piece of Pratibhhijna Hridayamby Swami Parananda Tirth.Very rarely does one get such an indepth insight to such an esoteric subject.Most of the contemporary work on Ksemraja's avante garde work has often lacked the insightful aspect that a yogi(seeker) brings into such subjects but one can feel elated that Swamiji has given us a perspective which is both scholarly as well as truly spiritual.

Ayaz Rasool's,"In Search of Roots" was a virtual journey to the shrine of Sharda.For a lot of people like us who may never be able to travel to the sacred seat of learning of our ancesstors this may well be a case of coming as close to reality as is possible.

Niraj Kumar seems to have the best of the both words.With consummate ease he mixes science and spirituality.Although one may disagree with the conclusions that Niraj draws but that notwithstanding one can awe inspired by his knowledge and the ability to traverse across different mind spaces, time zones and philosophical thoughts.

I await the next edition of Praznath.

Thanks and keep up the good work.

Autar Krishen Kher, Gandhinagar

Perspective

We owe it to our readers to say sorry at the outset for making them wait so long for the appearance of this issue of Praznath. We were flooded with anxious enquiries from many of them about the position and prospect of its publication, the emphasis being more on their craving for the kind of intellectually stimulating fare we had offered earlier, rather than on any kind of complaining. The fault lies partly with the high standard we have set for ourselves for carrying forward the discourse we have initiated about Kashmiri culture and identity characterized by an uncompromising insistence on truth and authenticity. Without making it look like an alibi for our limitations, we admit that though the response to our venture has been immensely encouraging, contributions at the creative level to enable us to move forward at the desired pace and in the desired manner have not been adequately commensurate. We are, however, happy that though late, we have not wandered into the lexicon of buzzwords and oversimplifications to represent a reality that is complex and requires deeper insights to comprehend than what superficial viewpoints that seek to erase disquieting traces of real history can ever provide.

It is only coincidental that these articles have been carried by us under the same cover, but all of them offer fascinating perspectives on a past that has been deliberately kept out of the dominant narratives on Kashmir and subjected to intense fusillades of intentionally triggered amnesia.

With as many as four articles related to literary and cultural traditions that have roots in Kashmir's Sanskritic past, this issue may appear as an attempt to take the readers on an imaginative trip to a lost and forgotten world. These articles are: 'Kshemendra and His *Samayamatrikā*' by A. N. D. Haksar, 'Society in Ancient and Early Medieval Kashmir' by S. S. Toshkhani, 'Bilhana's *Chaurapañchāshikā* and its Pictorial Illustrations' by Geetika Kaw Kher and 'Padmasambhava - a Pan-Asian Avatara from Kashmir?' by Niraj Kumar. It is only coincidental that these articles have been carried by us under the same cover, but all of them offer fascinating perspectives on a past that has been deliberately kept out of the dominant narratives on Kashmir and subjected to intense fusillades of intentionally triggered amnesia. Yet it is memory of the past that anchors and situates our identities.

Giving reasons for his selection of *Samayamātrikā* for translation into English in the "approximate millenary of Kshemendra", A. N. D. Haksar, noted scholar and translator of Sanskrit classics, refers to it as " one of the finest" of his satires, a genre "seldom associated with Sanskrit literature". The essay we have reproduced in this issue actually forms the introduction to his excellent translation of the work, through which he has provided valuable insights into the genius of this "prolific and multifaceted writer" belonging to 11th century Kashmir. What distinguishes Kshemendra, as a writer, in fact, is that using satire as a potent weapon, he tears into the hypocritical and scandalous behaviour of those wielding political, social or economic power, exposing, as no one else, the exploitative and oppressive elements of the society of his times. For his fierce and unsparing attacks on the high and the mighty for being drunk with power and mad after wealth, and the way he blasts them for the

condition to which they have reduced the ordinary people, Kshemendra stands, as pointed out by A. N. D. Haksar, "in the front rank of satirists". The noted scholar has chosen *Samayamātrikā* for translation also for "the light it throws on the social and other conditions of his times and the snapshots it offers of Kashmir". Yet, the lamentable fact is that Kshemendra is not only "practically unknown to readers in other languages", as he points out, but to most Kashmiris as well.

The first part of S.S. Toshkhani's article 'Society in Ancient and Early Medieval Kashmir' was published in the last issue of Praznath, in which the discussion was centred on social structures and institutions as well as processes of social dynamics that influenced the social norms and ethical attitudes of the people of the times. In the second part of the article carried in this issue, an attempt has been made to put together a broad but fairly reliable picture of various aspects of their social and cultural life. Venturing into many hitherto unexplored and uncharted areas in this context, the author has tried to bring to light several new and exciting facts, demolishing in the process the deeply entrenched but fallacious view that the Kashmiri way of life is largely the product of a spillover of Central Asian largesse.

The misfortune of Kashmiri is that its own speakers have been subverting its struggle to remain alive through deliberate indifference. But a language does not die only because of dwindling of the number of people who speak it; it can also be killed by attempts to mutate its original nature, by launching anti-mnemonic mechanisms to wipe out the specifities that give it its identity.

We have an article by art historian and scholar Geetika Kaw Kher, who is also the coordinating editor of this journal, in which she speaks effusively about the correspondence between the verses of Bilhana's lyrical masterpiece, the *Chaurapañchāshikā* and a series of miniature paintings inspired by them that she came across in a museum in Ahmedabad as an undergraduate student. The author is moved by the beauty and the seductive appeal of the "extremely tender and passionate verses" of erotic love said to have been recited by the poet at the time of his approaching death. She admiringly, yet authoritatively, analyzes the way their lyrical content has been rendered into "a series of sensuous and beautiful depictions", of particular interest to her being the fact that Bilhana's work has lent its name to a new style of Rajasthani miniature painting.

Niraj Kumar is an erudite young scholar endowed with a rare spirit of research. He tunnels through vast mounds of literary evidence to arrive at original, and sometimes startling, conclusions. His study of Buddhist history and literature is especially impressive, and his proclivity for probing and investigating unexplored areas cannot but compel the scholastic world to take notice. In this issue, we carry his article on Padmasambhava, the great master of Vajrayāna Buddhism who, he is inclined to believe, hailed from Kashmir-- his views supported by a strong tradition prevailing in Tibet. Particularly worth pondering is Niraj Kumar's contention that "Padmasambhava and his Niyingama sect and various schools of Kashmir Shaivism shared a common cultural matrix,"

Praznath considers language to be a vital part of the identity discourse, for language "situates us in the core reality of our being." In this issue too, as in the earlier ones, we have articulated our anxiety over the predicament of the Kashmiri language, which appears to be in the throes of extinction as its linguistic ecology is under the threat of severe erosion, the prospect of linguistic loss among diasporic Kashmiris being hauntingly real. The misfortune of Kashmiri is that its own speakers have been subverting its struggle to remain alive through deliberate indifference. But a language does not die only because of dwindling of the number of people who speak it; it can also be killed by attempts to mutate its original nature, by launching anti-mnemonic mechanisms to wipe out the specifities that give it its identity. And this is precisely what is happening today in Kashmir, where Kashmiri language is being put to political use "for subverting an emplaced culture and substituting it with a subculture", as pointed out by well-known intellectual, writer and scholar Shantiveer Kaul. In his article 'Memory and Counter-memory', he identifies the mechanisms employed for such subversion and analyses in depth the sinister implications of de-contextualization of the Kashmiri language that is taking place in various stages, like code-mixing, code-fractionation, rechristening of person names and place names etc.

It was the muezzin or the *moulvi* who initiated the stage

of code- mixing in Kashmiri "when a large number of words from other matrices were infused into the linguistic substrate left over after the first stage", Shantiveer Kaul says. In this stage "people were encouraged to use Persianized or Persian equivalents for legitimate Kashmiri words", he points out, contending that fractionation of the language to exclude the Sanskrit matrix, was "partly sub-conscious, partly acculturative and partly deliberate".

Expressing similar views, well-known Hindi journalist and writer Jawahar Lal Kaul laments in his article '*Kashmīr mein begānī Kashmiri*' that Kashmiri, a language that has evolved from Sanskrit through the intermediate stages of Prakrit and Apabhramsha, is being overlaid with Persian and Arabic words and expressions so extensively that its real linguistic identity has become totally unrecognizable today. The pace of this transplantation of foreign elements, he points out, was never so fast in the entire period of six hundred years of Islamic rule in Kashmir, as it has been during the last hundred years, and in particular, during the last fifty years or so. What is more disturbing for him is that even popular Kashmiri usages are being deliberately made obsolete by heavy borrowings from Urdu, in the madness to delink it from its Sanskrit matrix.

We have devoted an entire section in this issue to the remembrance of Arjan Dev Majboor, one of the most prominent poets of the Kashmiri language who departed from us recently... ... With his poetic vision rooted in his deep humanistic concerns, his aesthetics of a subtle blend of romantic imagination and modern sensibility. ... Majboor was a major presence in Kashmiri poetry.

Joining them from Yale University, USA is young Radhika Kaul talking about *Kashir*, Kashmiri language and *navsheen,* in an attempt to imagine an experience related to her roots.

We are happy to carry in this issue an excerpt from 'The Garden of Solitude', the debut novel of the young Kashmiri fiction writer Siddhartha Gigoo that gives, for the first time, a moving and poignant account of the displacement and dispossession of Kashmiri Pandits, and the callous indifference shown by the world to their tragedy. As a review of the novel by Rashneek Kher, that precedes the extract, convincingly underscores, Gigoo's lucid and engaging style, the pitfalls of self-pity and sentimentalism that he has cautiously avoided, makes him a strong claimant for serious attention as a promising writer of Indian English fiction.

We have devoted an entire excerpt in this issue to the remembrance of Arjan Dev Majboor, one of the most prominent poets of the Kashmiri language who departed from us recently after enriching Kashmiri literature, with six decades of his creativity marked by a constant urge for experimentation. With his poetic vision rooted in his deep humanistic concerns, his aesthetics of a subtle blend of romantic imagination and modern sensibility, his passionate attachment to the soil of his native land whose fragrance wafts through his lyrical imagery, Arjan Dev Majboor was a major presence in Kashmiri poetry. Majboor began his long creative journey as a progressive poet belonging to the charmed circle of poets led by Dina Nath Nadim whose appearance on the Kashmiri literary scene was nothing less than an explosion of creative energy that brought about a revolutionary change in the sensibility and idiom of Kashmiri poetry. Reinforcing that change, Majboor set up new standards of creativity in it by extending its thematic range. Majboor's progressivism was not characterized by a stubborn adherence to doctrinaire Marxism, but reflected his concern about the human condition and a strong restlessness to bring about change so that the world could become a better place for man to live in, guided by a vision based on the universal values of justice, equality and love. Like Nadim, Arjan Dev Majboor was a public poet in the sense that he addressed himself to an audience from which he aimed at eliciting a response as its representative. But the pillars of the utopia that both dreamt of building soon cracked and crashed when it collided with harsh realities on the ground. Political agendas driven by hegemonic notions of religious identity clashed with their communitarian concerns to give rise to a situation in which unbridgeable chasms in the sense of belonging came to the surface, leaving no space for a shared relationship based on geographical spread of cultural peculiarities that they had imagined. Cultural politics in Kashmir became nastily communal.

The situation culminated in the eruption of an Islamist insurgency that forced Kashmiri Pandits to leave Kashmir in 1990. The exodus split the Kashmiri speaking community vertically into two, just like the Sindhis after the partition of the country. Among those uprooted from their natural linguistic habitat were leading Kashmiri writers, artists and intellectuals. For many of them, including Arjan Dev Majboor, this was a trauma difficult to come to terms with, and though after a period of stunned silence they started responding to it at the creative level, it became a point of departure for them, raising questions of relevance, authenticity, recognition and evaluation of what they created. Majboor emerged from it, deeply disturbed and bitterly disillusioned but still able to think in terms of an inherited ethos and a belief in the essential greatness of man. It was in the post-exodus period that Majboor's poetry acquired a new poetic idiom when he voiced the tragedy and trauma and agony and anguish of an entire displaced and dispossessed community. Giving expression to a deep nostalgia for his lost paradisiacal home and the sense of utter shock and horror that he experienced over attempted ethnic cleansing of this community, Majboor now began to interweave his individual emotions into the larger narrative of the collective identity of an uprooted people. His poems of this phase, represented by the collections '*Pàdy Samayik*' and '*Tyŏl*, reflect a deeper awareness of the fact that this identity has grown on cultural roots provided by the Sanskritic traditions of Kashmir. The message that they seem to convey is that it is memory of our cultural past that situates us in the real core of our being.

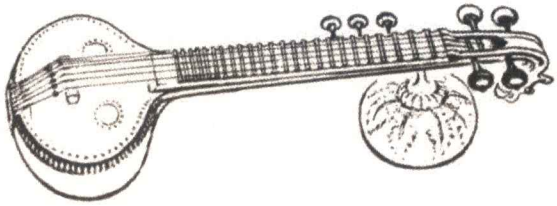
The exodus split the Kashmiri speaking community vertically into two, just like the Sindhis after the partition of the country. Among those uprooted from their natural linguistic habitat were leading Kashmiri writers, artists and intellectuals. For many of them, including Arjan Dev Majboor, this was a trauma difficult to come to terms with...

In the section devoted to the remembrance of Arjan Dev Majboor, we have four articles -- two in English and two in Hindi -- paying glowing tributes to him. The authors have reminisced eloquently about their intimate association with him and analyzed insightfully various dimensions and aspects, and shifts and phases, of his writing. While Arvind Gigoo, well-known English writer and translator, and Neeraj Santoshi, young writer and journalist, have written about his poetic personality in English; Chandrakanta, reputed Hindi novelist and short story writer and a recipient of the prestigious Vyas Samman instituted by the K. K.Birla Trust, and Maharaj Krishen Santoshi, prominent Hindi poet and writer, have chosen to write about him in Hindi. We have also carried four Kashmiri poems of Majboor translated into English by Arvind Gigoo, who without doubt is the best translator we have of Kashmiri poetry and prose into English today. What makes Arvind Gigoo stand out as a translator is his amazing ability to reconstruct and transcreate the original, even as he remains faithful to the writer, capturing the core of his / her sensibility.

The readers will also be delighted to see on the centre-spread an excellent photo-feature on the ruins of the magnificent Naran Nag temple, standing in the breathtakingly beautiful backdrop of the majestic Harmukh Mount and Gangabal, the sacred lake. The pix have been taken by Vinod Pandit, an amateur photographer, in course of his recent pilgrimage trip to the sacred spot.

With this, we depart, offering this issue of Praznath into the hands of our discerning readers.

Editor



Classics

Kshemendra and his Samaya Mātrikā

A.N. D. Haksar

We are reproducing here a slightly shortened version of the renowned author's introduction to his translation of Kshemendra's satirical work Samaya Mātrikā **from the original Sanskrit, under the title 'The Courtesan's Keeper: A Satire from Ancient Kashmir'. The book has been published by Rupa & Co., New Delhi. We are grateful to Shri Haksar as well as the publisher for kindly giving us the permission to do so.**

The present is the approximate millenary of Kshemendra, the celebrated writer in classical Sanskrit from eleventh century Kashmir. Little translated, he is practically unknown to readers in other languages. An important part of his work is satire. This is a genre comparatively rare in Sanskrit literature, and seldom associated with it in the current common perception of the ancient language as one mainly of religion and philosophy. A droll, observant account in it of Kashmir a thousand years ago would be rarer still.

The foregoing seemed sufficient reason to bring Samaya Mātrikā, one of the finest of Kshemendra's satires, before today's readers in the present translation, the first into English as far as known. Other reasons were: the sheer readability of this novella about a courtesan's life; the light it sheds on human propensities and on the social and other conditions of the time; the snapshots it offers of Kashmir; and a perspective of Sanskrit writing provided in the simplicity and the irony, the humour and the innate compassion of its vivid descriptions of people and places.

Before elaborating on the book, it would be fitting to introduce the author. Unlike many writers from ancient India, Kshemendra has left some personal details in his various works. Collated by modern scholars, and cross-checked with other sources such as Kalhana's history of Kashmir, the Rajatarangini, they provide an outline, however minimal, of the man's life and work.

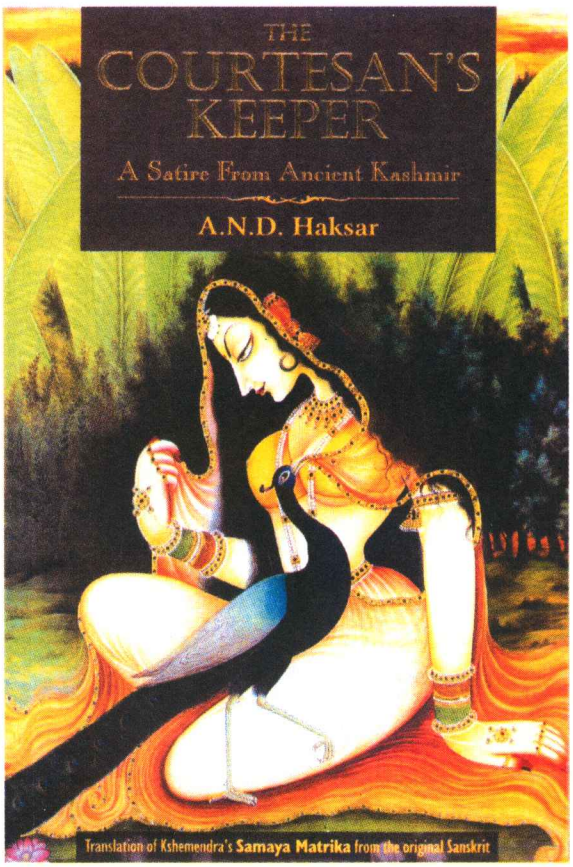
Much of Kshemendra's productive life corresponds with the reign of King Ananta (1028-1063 CE) in Kashmir. This king is named as the ruler of the time in five of his works, including *Samaya Mātrikā*. A sixth names the king's son and successor Kalasha (1063-1087 CE). Scholars surmise that the writer was perhaps born before, and educated during the time of Ananta's grandfather, King Sangramaraja (1003-1028 CE). Though his own dates cannot be pin-pointed, they are estimated as roughly between 990 and 1070 CE.

Kshemendra came from a cultured and affluent family. His grandfather Sindhu, perhaps the same as a high treasury official of this name mentioned by Kalhana, may have founded the family fortune. His father Prakashendra was a wealthy and pious man who devoted himself to religious rites and philanthropy. While describing these, Kshemendra refers to him with warm respect and gives a tender account of his death in ecstasy while at prayer. His own son Somendra continued the family's scholarly tradition, making an addition to one of his father's later works and also providing further details about him.

Given this background, the kind of education Kshemendra received is not surprising. He mentions studying literature with the foremost teacher of the time, the famous Shaiva philosopher and literary scholar, Abhinavagupta4, who was active in Kashmir till about 1015 CE. Two other teachers he names are the poet

Gangaka, and the preceptor Soma. The second appears to have initiated him into Vaishnava studies. A third was Manjubhadra or Viryabhadra, a distinguished scholar from Nepal, with whom he studied Buddhism. His erudition was thus both vast and varied. The two ancient poets he has eulogized are the sages Valmiki and Vyasa, traditional composers of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. His early work includes verse abstracts of both the epics. Devoted in particular to the author of the second, he frequently uses the epithet, Vyasadasa, the servant of Vyasa, for himself.

Apart from his forbears and teachers, Kshemendra has also named others who occasioned his writings. The two abridgements of the epics were prepared at the instance of his friend, the Brahmin Ramayasha, and a third at that of Devadhara. The Buddhist monk Nakka encouraged his later compilation of the Jataka stories. A well-known work on poetics7 was composed for Udayasimha, the son of his friend Ratnasimha, the ruler of Vijayapura. This prince, himself a poet, is also mentioned by Kshemendra as his student and quoted by him in a separate work on poetry.8 Another student he quotes there is the prince, Lakshmanaditya.



Though he had princely friends and students, Kshemendra did not seem to have sought or received royal patronage, as was the case with many men of letters in that age. Perhaps his own resources precluded any such need. While he refers with due courtesies to the king of the time in some of his works, in others there are no such references at all. Eulogies indicative of patronage are also totally absent. The overall impression is that of a scholarly and meticulous man of independent means, who engaged himself in literary and intellectual pursuits for their own sake.

A century and a quarter ago, Kshemendra's work was known only through references in Kalhana's Rājatranginī and in some anthologies. Its first manuscript discovered in modrn times, by A.C. Burnell in 1871 at Tanjore, was that of his third abridgement, Gunadhya's lost Brihatkathāmañjarī. In the succeeding half-century, Indologists G. Buhler, A. Stein, P. Peterson, S.C. Das and M.S. Kaul, at different times, located manuscripts of his other works, mainly in Kashmir. So far, eighteen of these have been located and their texts printed. Another sixteen are known, at least by title, from references and quotations in these texts, but still remain to be found. A list of these is appended with the endnotes.9

Of the now available works, three are the already mentioned abridgements, respectively of the Rāmayana, the Mahābhārata and the Brihatkathāmañjarīī. Academic opinion considers them the fruit of the early years of Kshemendra's literary career. The last mentioned bears a date corresponding to 1037 CE. Three other works deal with poetics and literary criticism. They are still regarded as important contributions in these fields, apart from providing valuable information about other Sanskrit writers. Four are satires on contemporary life, among them *Samaya Mātrikā*, which also contains a date corresponding to 1050 CE. Of the remaining eight, five are didactic works on conduct and policy, and one a compendium ion daily rites. Finally there are two devotional works: Kshemendra's long poetic account of the Buddha's good deeds and former lives, dated to a year corresponding to 1052 CE, and his shorter verse narration of the ten incarnations of the god Vishnu, dated to 1066 CE and regarded as the last of his known compositions.

The sixteen works known only through reference or quotation include some plays and long poems, a satirical novel, a possible retelling in verse of Bāna's Kādambarī, and what appears from the title as a commentary on Vatsyayana's Kāma Sūtra. There is also Kshemendra's history of Kashmir, the Nripāvalī, which is described by Kalhana12 as 'the compostion of poet', but descried as full of errors.

A contemporary scholar has attempted a description of a number of these so far unlocated works with some interesting details culled from available quotations and references. It is to be hoped that a search for them will be pursued, so that at least some can be brought to light in coming years.

The existing Kshemendra corpus reflects a prolific and multifaceted writer. In the tradition of earlier Kashmiri savants like Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta, he was both a notable poet and a seminal theorist of poetry. While modern scholarship has generally lauded his contribution as manifold and important, it has tended to emphasise the historical and literary significance of his work on poetics. But a wider view has also been expressed. For K.M. Panikkar, 'Kshemendra was perhaps the most comprehensive mind of his time, who wandered in every field, including satire, with distinction.' For A.K. Warder he stands in the front rank of satirists' and 'invites us to enjoy the multiple contrasts between the idealized or rather morally balanced world of legends and the bitter reality of contemporary society... for these we must recognise him amongst the greatest kavis.'

The title Samaya Mātrikā can be translated literally as 'Little Mother by Compact'. She was an older woman, usually a retired practitioner, often a relative, who stayed with a courtesan to act as her chaperone, guardian and manager. Another word which Kshemendra used for such a heroine is Kuttani, indicating a madam, bawd or procuress. She is the principal character in this tale, recounted in 639 verses grouped in eight chapters of varying length.

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The narrative begins in Pravarapura, the principal city of Kashmir at that time. It has been identified by modern scholars with the site of Srinagar, the present day capital. Kalavati, a young and beautiful courtesan there, is in distress as her guardian, who was also her grandmother, is dead and her business is suffering as a result. She confides her worries to her friend Kanka, a local barber, who advises her to get a replacement. He also recommends one whose life story, he says, will be highly educational for her.

This story is narrated in the second chapter of this work The present name of its protagonist is Kankali, but it was different at her birth and changed many times in the course of a colourful career and many travels. During these, she moved from place to place within Kashmir, eventually going out through a mountain pass in Pir Panjal to the plains below. Many of the places where she lived have been identified through academic research and provide a fascinating glimpse of the continuity in the historical geography of Kashmir.

Kankali was born at Parihasapura, a former capital city, and was the daughter of a woman who minded the grindstones at a local inn. A pretty, precocious girl also given to stealing, she was put into the flesh trade by her greedy mother when she was only seven. As a young woman she shifted to a nearby town where there was no dearth of customers, but eventually robbed a temple after a tryst in its sanctum with a palace guard. Fleeing to another town, she became the concubine of a wealthy country squire and the mistress of his property. After engineering his death, she took up with his son, resorting to witchcraft in the process. But she soon moved to a mountain shrine, posing as a widow engaged in religious rites for ancestors.

She then lived with a rich old knight and so conducted herself at his death, as to be treated as his wife and officially given possession of his assets. This was followed by an affair with an official, whose house she sold with a manipulated court order despite resistance from his sons. However, alarmed at their attitude, she moved to a convent where she resumed her former trade. Jailed for dealing in stolen goods, she escaped after sleeping with the jailer and fled once more to another town, this time living as a Buddhist nun. Here, she became pregnant and then returned to the capital as a wet nurse for a minister's child. Quitting the job when the child fell sick, she lived thereafter as a cattle herder, a cake seller, a naked holy woman and a porter among other occupations. Eventually she left Kashmir to wander in the plains, passing herself as a person of great age and esoteric wisdom.

The third chapter describes with colourful pen pictures the quickening of life in the city's bordello quarter as dusk falls. In the next, Kankali appears in person, brought by the barber, Kanka, to meet the troubled

courtesan. A skeleton of a woman with conspicuous teeth, she accepts Kalavati as a daughter and proceeds to give detailed advice illustrated with stories from her own experience. This continues in the fifth chapter which lists eighty types of passion which need consideration while dealing with men.

The sixth chapter is a counterpoint to the third. It is morning time and Kalavati is escorted by her new 'mother' and the barber to the top of her house to survey the day's market. Various possibilities are pointed out, including an officer on horseback an dan envoy from a southern kingdom. Finally they settle on Panka, the young inexperienced son of a rich local merchant.

After an agreement is negotiated through the barber, Panka comes to Kalavati's house in the next chapter. The bejeweled youth is accompanied by seven voluble parasites, looking for some benefit at his expense. Kankali first has to deal with these characters, who include an official, a drama teacher and a doctor's son among others. There is a party before Panka is taken to Kalavati's bed.

In the final chapter, Kankali arranges to get the parasites out of the house with a hue and cry about a theft, and threatens to call the police. She then visits Panka's father in the morning and inveigles a large sum from this moneyed and miserly trader. Finally she persuades Panka to sign legal documents to provide for her ward's future. Kalavati's interests assured, it only remains to drive this young lover out with insults and threats of his getting involved in a murder charge.

The story depicts a vibrant and diverse society. Chiefly urban, it is also relatively stable and harmonious. Its mix is liberal, ranging from the busy courtesans and their adjuncts in the foreground to the affluent and the indigent and from intellectuals and workers to the upper crust and the humbler classes.

The story depicts a vibrant and diverse society. Chiefly urban, it is also relatively stable and harmonious. Its mix is liberal, ranging from the busy courtesans and their adjuncts in the foreground to the affluent and the indigent and from intellectuals and workers to the upper crust and the humbler classes. There is, for example, a minister seeking religious ordination, a rich moneylender trying to ward off supplicants, and a porter who carries loads along the trade route to the plains. There are priests who resell temple offerings, monks who fornicate on the quiet and doctors who may be quacks. There is an elaborate functioning administration, though some officials make fortunes during the time of the autumn harvest, when tax is collected, and others are susceptible to bribery in the court. On one hand there are country magnates of substance and retired knights, cavalry officers and poets, accountants and shopkeepers; and on the other, there are modest flower sellers on the streets, vendors of liquor, beggars and bandits.

Women move about freely in this society. They inherit property and litigate in courts. The heroine is a rich cattle owner at one time and the respectable widow of a gentleman at another. She is also, in turn, a roadside mendicant's companion, a living goddess and soothsayer. Her career displays an awareness of the world outside Kashmir. The story refers to Turkish and Chinese people, apart from those of Gauda and Vanga in the east Indian plains. There is mention of the great cities of Varanasi and Pataliputra and of the West Indian kingdom of Malava, whose ruler is represented as maintaining an envoy in the Valley.

Kshemendra also describes the habits of the people. Both women and men are depicted as wearing jewellery and dyeing their hair. They drink wine, eat fish and mutton, and chew betel leaf, a luxury imported from the plains. Cloth from China is held in value. Fairs and festivals are popular and frequent. People visit temples and shrines, convents and monasteries, though also for purposes other than prayerful. Many believe in charms and amulets, spells and witchcraft, and many are attracted to holy personages or those pretending to be so. Religion sits lightly on others who do not hesitate to joke about gods and goddesses to make a point.

It is in this lively setting that Samaya Mātrikā's story unfolds. The principal characters are an attractive courtesan, her shrewd old keeper and their customer, a naïve youth. Each is drawn in vivid detail, as are the lesser figures: the experienced barber, the avaricious merchant, the loquacious parasites and the pert servant women. The events mainly take place in the courtesan quarter of the capital city and are described in picturesque details.

The Kashmir of Samaya Mātrikā is also known from other works. Kalhana's Rājataranginī was written just a hundred years later, and it is supplemented by other literary and archeological evidence. By 1050 CE, the turbulence of the early years of Ananta's reign gradually seems to have given way to peace and prosperity. The valley bustled with old and new towns. Trade and agriculture flourished. Travel to and from other regions may not have been as frequent as in earlier times, but was still considerable, specially on the southern salt route17, so called as there was no local production of salt and it had to e regularly imported.

The presence of many temples and Buddhist monasteries indicated an active religious life of the people. Ananta and his consort Queen Suryamati were both devotees of Shiva and built temples and endowed foundations in honour of the Great God. A temple to his son Ganesha is mentioned in Samaya Mātrikā. The work begins with invocations to the goddess Kālī and to Kāma, the god of love. Kshemendra himself appears to have been a devotee of both Vishnu and Buddha, as we have already seen

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It was also a time of substantial literary activity in Kashmir. Somadeva, a younger contemporary, followed Kshemendra's abridgement of Brihatkathāmañjarī with his own retelling some thirty years later for his patron, Queen Suryamati. This work, the famous Kathā Sarit Sāgara, is generally considered much better reading than its predecessor, though it may be less faithful to the lost original.

Among Kshmendra's other junior contemporaries were the writers Bilhana, author of the biography Vikramānkadevacharita about a king in south India, and Mammata, the rhetorician who wrote the celebrated, and still used work on poetics, Kāvyaprakāsha. Two others were Kshemaraja and Bhaskara, both students of Kshemendra's old teacher Abhinavagupta and well-known commentators on Shaiva philosophy in separate works. From these and other details, it would appears that Kashmir was then far from being a cultural backwater as in later times, but was rather 'in the vanguard of Indian culture with notable contributions to every aspect of its life.'18 Samaya Mātrikā, a product of that period, reflects the ebullient age in which it was written.

A comparison of Kshemendra's numerous writings with the criteria of literary excellence and propriety spelt out in his own dissertations on poetics would be fruitful field for academic research. Another would be the analysis of any evolution in the language and presentation of his works which span a period of three decades. Samaya Mātrikā belongs to the middle of this period and may thus represent a talent already matured.

A reader of this work cannot but be struck by the directness and economy of its style. Though it contains some scenic and allegoric descriptions in the conventional manner, the elaborate ornamentation of the *kāvya* genre of this period is largely absent. The narrative is terse and the pen pictures, brief and sharp, sometimes brutally so. The action is generally fast-paced, except in one chapter where it gives way to didactic classification.

A notable feature of the work is Kshemendra frequent usage of unusual words and compounds, some unavailable in the standard Sanskrit dictionaries and others whose meaning occasionally needs to be inferred. This affects the easy comprehensibility of his language which nevertheless provides a contrast to the general writing of the period and its conventional idiom.

To translate Kshemendra has been a challenging and fascinating experience. Apart from its reflection of the human condition, his satire also conveys some colour of his homeland as it was then, and a tinge of his own personality. This brilliant and versatile writer deserves to be better known and I hope more of his work can come before today's readers through other translations.

Culture

Society in Ancient and Early Medieval Kashmir- II

S. S. Toshkhani

[The first part of this article, published in the previous issue, dealt with the ethnology, organization and institutions of the society in early Kashmir as well as the social dynamics that influenced it. This the second part of the article in which an attempt has been made to present a broad but reliable picture of different aspects of the social and cultural life of the people of that age.]

Aspects of Social and Cultural Life:

Though not enough material is available to us to go into extensive details, we can rely on literary sources to obtain a fairly credible but broad picture of the social life of people in early Kashmir. Beginning with the Nilamata Purana, we can say that "ever sportive and joyful people enjoying continuous festivities" occupied the sylvan Valley in those times. Living in perfect harmony with their beautiful natural environs, "they played, danced and sang to express their joys, to please their gods and to appease their demons", as Dr. Ved Ghai[28] puts it. They internalized the different moods of an exuberant and bounteous nature. The cycle of seasons with the myriad charms of a beautiful spring, a salubrious summer as well as a harsh snowy winter, the uncertainties of weather, the pace of the slow flowing rivers, the placid lakes reflecting the majesty of the surrounding high mountains all this deeply influenced the way they lived and thought. The ecology of their land determined their attitude to life. While gaiety of the festivals they celebrated throughout the year reflected one aspect of their nature, deep philosophical reflection on the nature of things formed another.

King Avantivarman and his queen offering prayers at a temple, Avantipur

As the scenario unfolds before us of how the ancient Kashmiris lived their daily life at the socio-cultural plane, we find ourselves excited at the discoveries we make and also astonished at the fallacies we had been entertaining. The narrative of how they dressed and adorned themselves, what were their food habits and what constituted their cuisine, how they entertained and amused themselves, what was their educational system like, what were the means of

travel and transportation they used, what were the religious beliefs they held, and so on, is indeed quite absorbing.

Costumes and Adornments:

Clothing and adornment are expressions of the culture of a people, but intriguing though it may seem we do not come across any evidence, literary or archaeological, of ancient inhabitants of Kashmir dressing themselves in what have been regarded for long as traditional and typical articles of Kashmiri attire. The *pheran, potsh, pūts* and *taranga*, *kasāba* or *kalaposh* etc. are totally missing from ancient literary texts and from sculptural representation. It is true that the term *prāvarna* occurs in the *Nilamata*, and *prāvara* in Kalhana's Rajatarangini, for a sort of woolen cloak worn to shield the body from cold, but whether it was same thing as the present day *pheran* is highly doubtful. In fact, these items of costume appear to have been introduced, or should we say imposed, much later in history, when exactly cannot be determined with surety, but certainly after the advent of Islam in the 14th century. How close is the resemblance of the Kashmiri *pheran* to the *pairahan* of West Asia, both etymologically and morphologically, and *kalaposh* or *kasābā* to the traditional headgear of women in Egypt and Sudan, cannot be missed. What we find actually is the early Kashmiris wearing a variety of costumes and adornments well suited to the requirements of time and clime as well as dictated by good taste. As the climate was extremely cold during winter, people naturally covered their bodies with woolen garments at that time of the year, which must have constituted of what Kalahana calls *prāvara*[29] and is described as *prāvarna* in the Nilamata. There are also references to the use of *kambala* or fine woolen blankets by the rich while the poor had to rest contended with *sthūla kambala* or coarse blankets.[30]

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Sifting through further literary evidence, we have Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang), the famous Chinese traveler who visited Kashmir in 631 CE, telling us in his account that the Kashmiri people wore leather doublets and clothes of white linen.[31] Other sources inform us that that both male and female attire consisted of *vasana yugala* or a pair of garments, upper and lower -- and of course, these were stitched. These garments, we learn, were made from a variety of fabrics – cotton, wool, china silk, *patīka* (a coarse variety of silk), and hemp. Garments interwoven with threads of gold, "dazzling the eyes" were also worn, according to *Kuttanīmata Kāvya*,[32] a 9th century work. A wealth of information about the way Kashmiris dressed and adorned themselves is available in Kshemendra's works *Narmamālā, Samayamātrikā* and *Deshopadesha* (11th century).[33] From these we come to know that men wore a long-sleeved tunic called *kañchuka* as the upper garment. Women's upper garment too was called *kañchuka*, but in their case it was both long-sleeved and half–sleeved (a kind of jacket not different from the modern *choli*). As their lower garment, men wore a kind of trousers, which according to Kshemendra were called *pinga* or *janghāla*. He has also used the term *karparī* and *sampatī* for trousers, but perhaps these trousers were of a different kind or made from particular fabrics. Men also wore *dhotī* or *patī*, but *patī* has been used sometimes to mean a kind of scarf. They wore *angarakshaka* also over the *kañchuka* and wrapped their bodies in *tusti* (perhaps a forerunner of the present day shawl). Kshemendra has also referred to *kambala* used for wrapping round the body. The male headgear generally consisted of *shirahashāta*, a kind of turban. Caps of different sizes and shapes called the *tupikā* (Hindi *topī*), were also in vogue. Kshemendra refers to *mochot*,[34] a type of socks, or perhaps boots, reaching partway up to the knees, as being commonly in use.

According to Damodargupta's *Kuttanīmata*, men, rich and poor alike, wore leather shoes[35] – a necessity in a cold place like Kashmir. The rich wore fashionable shoes having floral decorations from outside and fitted with steel-made soles imported probably from Central Asia. Bee- wax was applied inside these shoes to make them comfortable to wear. The more fashionable people, according to Kshemendra, loved to wear *mayuropānah* or peacock-shaped shoes.[36]

We do not get much information from Kshemendra

A Harwan tile showing a female figure in transparent robes holding a flower vase

about female dress except that they wore the *kañchuka* as the upper garment. According to Damodargupta they also wore *vārbana*, which he describes as an item of dress similar to the *kañchuka*.[37] Men too wore *vārbana,* but in their case, it was a sort of short fur coat. Kalhana tells us that women generally attired themselves in a sari and a jacket (*kañchuka*).[38] For the upper garment, they also draped themselves in *uttarīya* or *amshuka*[39] or wrapped woolen shawls around the shoulders to look more graceful. In King Harsha's time, they wore half-sleeved jackets and lower garments "which were so long that their tail ends touched the ground".[40] "Fashionable women", says Ajay Mitra Shastri referring to the *Kuttanīmata Kāvya*, "loved to wear soft, clean and perfumed clothes."[41] Garments of Chinese silk in particular were valued items of their wardrobe.

Much of what Kshemendra, Kalhana and Damodargupta reveal about the tradition of costumes and ornaments in vogue in early Kashmir is supported by archaeological evidence of an earlier period in the form of tiles, sculptural representation in stone, bronze and even ivory, stucco figurines and wall paintings. Thus, we have the Harvan tiles, a virtual picture gallery of different aspects of every Kashmiri life, and the terracotta images from Ushkur of a later time, revealing to us a somewhat coherent and definitely interesting picture of the styles of clothing that prevailed up to the end of the Kushana period. On one of the Harvan tiles, we see a female dancer wearing loose tubular trousers while another one shows a female dancer playing on a drum wearing similar trousers and a jacket with a sash tied around her waist. A different tile depicts a woman carrying a flower vase, wearing a diaphanous robe and large earrings. On another tile, a male water carrier is shown wearing the dhoti. On some other tiles women appear wearing close fitting caps. Some Harvan tiles depict men too wearing trousers and close fitting robes. Dr. S. C. Ray finds Central Asian influence on the dress shown in these representations,[42] but that needs to be more closely investigated as the inferences drawn appear to be more conjectural than real. Several terracotta figurines from Ushkur show women in beautiful coiffures with their hair fixed with elegant hairpins. Some terracotta busts show them wearing *kañchuka*s and necklaces. A large number of terracotta fragments showing girdles, finger rings and other types of jewellery have also been found from Ushkur, yielding more useful information about the subject.

A male water carrier from Harwan

A dancer wearing a loose robe and trousers with a long scarf held in both hands

Similarly, we have a number of stone sculptures that provide us with valuable archaeological evidence about the types of dress and ornaments that people in Kashmir wore from the 6th century onwards. An imposing image of pre-Karkota period Kartikeya from Bijbihara (Vejibror) shows the deity wearing a long tunic and folded drapery with "streamers at the back of the head". The image of Sūrya from Martanda, which is now in the Cleveland Museum, USA, also depicts the sun deity clad

in a long tunic and boots. On the relief panels in Avantipura temples, we find depicted King Avantivarman and his queen offering prayers at the Shiva temple. We can see the queen wearing a blouse with a scarf over her well-coiffured head. The images of Indrānī and the Chāmundā from Pandrethan show the goddesses wearing a tunic (*kañchuka*) that goes below the waistline and a sari-like lower garment. Several other stone and metal images displayed in the S P S Museum, Srinagar, like the splendid Vishnu Chaturānana from Avantipura, seated Bodhisattva Padmapāni, Buddha's mother holding the branch of a tree before his nativity, standing Bodhisattva from Pandrethan, Sūrya from Martand, Kāmadeva seated between Rati and Prīti from Avantipur, also illustrate features of dressing and adorning in early Kashmir. To sum up, the costume traditions described by Kshemendra and Kalhana are fully confirmed by the relief panels and stone sculptures of Avantipur and Martand. They show that the common female costumes during the period consisted of a short jacket or blouse, a richly embroidered tunic slipping down below the waist as the upper garment and a long skirt flowing down to the ankles as the lower, and also a long scarf draped across the shoulders. Several bronzes and sculptures of this period show male figures with neatly trimmed beard and moustaches, a cloak "hanging from the waist by means of a belt" or a long tunic being the common male attire. Kashmiri bronzes of the Karkota and successive periods, which bear a close affinity to the sculptural representations, confirm these traditions of dress and decoration.

A female musician wearing trousers playing on a drum, Harwan

Vivid pictorial representations of medieval Kashmiri costumes and jewellery can also be observed in the richly decorated monasteries of Tibet, Central Asia and Laddakh. It is a well-known fact that artists and artisans from Kashmir were commissioned to build and decorate these monasteries in the 10th-11th century. Carrying their art style with them to these trans-Himalayan regions, they produced exquisite murals, scroll paintings, stucco images and woodcarvings, which are regarded as a continuation of Kashmiri artistic traditions. Most interesting in this context are the murals in the monastery of Alchi in Laddakh, particularly the paintings on the profusely decorated walls of Sumtsek or the three- tiered temple of the monastic complex. Said to have been executed by Kashmiri artists, these paintings provide a virtual feast for the eyes in respect of dress forms and dress styles of medieval Kashmir. They depict the same modes of dress that the Kashmiri bronzes of the 9th to 11th centuries display. A prominent example is the figure of Prajñāpārmitā on a panel, shown wearing "a tight fitting blouse of diaphanous stuff with low neckline", exposing the breasts.[43] Her lower garment is a skirt reaching up to the toes and she is draped in a gossamer- fine long scarf covering the head and the shoulders. The scarf is richly embroidered with naturalistic designs. The female attendants of the goddess are also shown dressed in a similar manner. These features are present in the sculptural reliefs of Avantipur also. Adds art historian A. K. Singh, "The goddess in the painting is provided with all the customary ornaments known to Kashmiri art since the time of Lalitaditya."[44] Of equal interest from the point of view of male attire is the large sized figure

Indrani from Pandrethan

of Manjushri, the Buddhist god of wisdom. He is shown wearing a "sumptuous and lavishly embroidered dhoti and a scarf and a gold incrusted triple diadem."[45] The figures of the divinities adoring him are also shown wearing similar garments and jewellery, their dhotis especially displaying beautiful decorative textile motifs.

Perhaps most interesting so far as depiction of Kashmiri costumes is concerned are the colossal statues of the three Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri and Maitreya, to whom the three-tier temple at Alchi is dedicated. They occupy recessed alcoves on three walls of the temple with fascinating and lively paintings executed on their lower garments, the most remarkable being those painted on Avalokiteshvara's dhoti. In these paintings, we observe a variety of costumes. The male figures are generally shown "wearing long full-sleeved tunics, tight trousers or dhotis and turbans and occasional shawls", observes A. K. Singh.[46] "The tunics or coats of men are swallow-tailed, fanning out at the bottom with stiff hem and cut at the sides", he adds.[47] One of the most remarkable paintings appearing on the dhoti of Avalokiteshvara depicts five royal horsemen riding in full gallop with their retinue. They are shown wearing richly embroidered coats of knee-length and tight trousers, as pointed out by Singh.[48]

Temple dancer, Alchi Pic: Benoy K Behl

The females are generally shown wearing "tight and short blouses tracing the curves of their breasts", long skirts reaching down to the toes and gossamer scarves covering the heads.[49] Their skirts too "fan out at the bottom" and display rich embroidery work or natural textile designs, as do their shawls and tunics. The painting of Green Tara provides an exquisite example of the type of female attire and jewellery.

The costumes of both male and female figures appearing on Avalokiteshvara's dhoti, it can be observed, perfectly match the description of the dress in vogue in ancient and medieval Kashmir as described in Kalhana's Rajatarangini. One of the scenes depicting a temple dancer performing a dance offers an interesting study in this respect. Though the dancer is shown without an upper garment, she is wearing a skirt reaching down to the ankles and a long scarf with textile designs on it across her shoulders. She is also wearing a large pearl garland round her neck, with other ornaments profusely adorning her body, including her beautifully coiffeured hair. Behind her is seated a male figure, probably of a prince as a sword in one of his raised hands suggests, attired in a tunic with rich textile designs on it and a dhoti. He too is wrapped in a fine shawl flung over one of his shoulders. Coloured tassels are shown attached to his locks of hair.

Jewellery and hairdressing

Women as well as men in early Kashmir were very fond of wearing ornaments of different kinds and of adorning themselves. *Shringāra*, of course was everywhere the ladies' prerogative and Kashmiri belles too never fought shy of making a fashion statement by embellishing their bodies with a variety of trendy jewellery, the lowre of gold underscoring their sense of feminine glamour. Kalhana mentions necklaces, earrings, armlets, wristlets, anklets etc. as the ornaments that Kashmiri women loved to

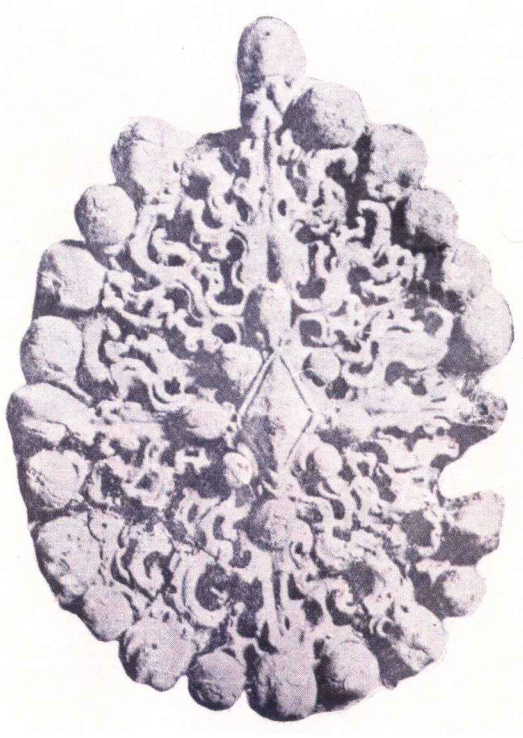
wear.[50] Damodargupta delights in describing various kinds of necklaces hugging the bosoms of pretty women of his times. He speaks of pearl necklaces (*muktā hāra*) having several strands of pearls.[51] Kshemendra tells us about the coral collars (*kanthī*) and conch-shell necklaces (*shankhalatikā*) that women of ordinary means used to wear in his times.[52] They were fond of wearing earrings of different sizes and shapes. One has only to study closely the ornaments of the statues of goddesses (and gods too) displayed in the Shri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar to trace the aesthetical history of the exquisite designs in use in medieval Kashmiri jewellery Both Damodargupta and Kshemendra speak of the palm-leaf shaped eardrop known as *kanaka tādī* that came to Kashmir from the South. King Harsha introduced new types of jewelleries in the 11th century, which too were from the South.[53] These included *ketaka*-leafed tiaras, pendants that rested on the forehead and were known as *tilaka* (modern *tikkā*), golden strings at the end of the locks, which seem to resemble the ornament called *tālaraz* in Kashmiri. Ladies also loved to wear a number of bracelets known as *valaya* or *kataka*. They wore small finger rings of gold known as *bālikā* in the root of the finger. Jingling girdles (*karghanī*) adorning the hip and tinkling anklets (*nūpura*) on the feet added a certain lyrical charm to the female image. But where was the *dejahor*, the ear ornament that identifies the married status of Kashmiri Pandit women? Strangely, we find no mention of it anywhere in literature of the times, or in sculptural representations. Or, was it the same thing as *tātanka*? Regarded by some as a stylized form of *shrīchakra*, it was probably introduced later -- when exactly is for the scholars to scratch their heads about.

Budha's mother holding the branch of a tree before his birth. Note the ear ornaments she is wearing

One thing, however, is certain. Kashmiri men too, like their counterparts in other parts of the country in those times, liked to adorn themselves with ornaments of different designs. They included necklaces, earrings, wristlets, and finger rings. Perhaps this gave them that refined "*nāgara*" or "city-bred" look which was the in-thing in those times. Not to be left behind, but not able to afford gold or silver, men of ordinary means wore ornaments of cheap materials like glass beads and conch shells to look smart.

Hairstyles

A highly developed aesthetic sense seemed to be the main factor that guided women -- and men as well -- in early and medieval Kashmir, to adopt different means for looking graceful and well groomed. Literary works, supported strongly by archaeological evidence, suggest that many modes of hairdressing were prevalent in that period among ladies to arrange their tresses and cast a spell on the onlooker. Indeed, their coiffeurs appear to have been amazingly beautiful and elaborate. Three kinds of hairdo were particularly popular among them, we learn from Damodaragupta -- *venī*, *dhamilla* and *alkāvalī*. And this was not the case with fashion-conscious beauties alone, but constituted the general way Kashmiri ladies preferred to have their hair arranged. *Venī* was a long, dangling braid decked with flowers or strands of pearls. *Dhamilla*, as Ajay Mishra Shastri explains, was a form of coiffeur in which the hair was tied into a big knot over the head and adorned



Indrani from Pandrethan

with flowers.[54] Bilhana's reference to it in his *Chaurpañchāshikā* shows it was quite fashionable for charming ladies of Kashmir to display a long flower-bedecked *venī* in his days. *Alkāvalī*, according to Shastri, consisted of "arrangement of hair in rows of spiral locks on the forehead."[55] One has only to look at terracotta heads of beauties from Ushkur and Akhnur to have an idea of how charming this style was. Some terracotta fragments found there also provide evidence that bejeweled hairpins were used to hold them in place. With such glamorous hairdo being the fashion of the day, what was the need for "my fair ladies" of that period to hide their beautiful tresses under a hideous skullcap called *kalaposh*?

Terracotta head of a lady from Ushkur

Various modes of dressing the hair were prevalent among men also. Fashion- conscious men wore their hair long with coloured tassels attached to them as we have already seen above. According to Damodaragupta, kings and nobles braided their hair in several ways. Affluent people arranged their hair in a way that a long piece of cloth covered three fourths of the head, leaving one fourth open.[56] Men also decorated their hair with floral garlands. (Even today '*poshamot*' or 'one who is mad after flowers', is how a lover is referred to in Kashmiri poetry.

Terracotta head of a male figure form Ushkur

What is indeed interesting is that both men and women used a variety of unguents and cosmetics as beauty-aids – at least those who were more fashion-conscious. They applied various kinds of perfumed pastes known as *angarāga* and *vilepana* on the face and other parts of the body to improve their looks and enhance their physical attraction. These emollients were prepared from ingredients like saffron, sandalwood, camphor and andropogon,[57] and what not. Ladies with mirrors in hand sat for an elaborate *shringāra* or toilette using all sorts of cosmetic herbs and powders to look glamorous and pretty and make eyes turn. They anointed their bodies with sandalwood and saffron pastes to make their skin glow. They daubed leaves soaked with musk on their cheeks as perfume and applied collyrium to their eyes[58] to cast those magic looks. They also reddened their palms and feet, and even lips, with *alaktaka* or lac-dye, which they also used for varnishing their nails. Women were extremely fond of painting different designs and various kinds of beauty marks on their faces.[59] Men too were appearance conscious and tried to look attractive and smart by applying mustard on their forehead and saffron pomade[60] on their beards. They painted their nails and perfumed their clothes with various kinds of powders.

Head of a lady from Letpura

Food and Drinks

At the outset, it must be stated that early Kashmiris were essentially connoisseurs of good food. We may not have exact details of the food habits of the early people of Kashmir or what constituted their cuisine, but there are no prizes for saying that rice was their staple food, as it presently is. Panini's commentator Patañjali knew it as early as in the 2nd century BC when he wrote at one place, "Devadatta, remember that we had gone to Kashmir and had eaten rice there? Devadatta, let us go to Kashmir to have a hearty meal of rice".[61] Patañjali has used the word '*odana*' in this sentence, which means 'bolied rice'. But there were several preparations that the ancient Kashmiris made from rice, other than boiled rice, including rice sweetened with sugar (modern *pulāv*?), rice

mixed with pulses (*khichari*), rice boiled in sugar and milk (*khīr*), rice cakes and dried rice etc. Rice flour has also been mentioned in Nilamata Purana and Rajatarangini.[62]

Barley, and not wheat, was the other important cereal that was consumed. *Apūpa* and *pishtaka* (bread and cake) of barley flour were very much relished. A special festival was held to celebrate the ripening of barley in the fields. Pulses like *mudga* (*mūng*), *masūra*, *kultha*, *māsha* and *chanaka* (gram) were widely consumed by people, we learn from literary sources. Being a cheap variety of pulses, *mudga* was commonly cooked and served to Brahmanas on certain occasions And of course *parpataka* or *pāpad* made from pulses was enjoyed as an appetizer.

Though not much mention is made of vegetables in literary sources, there are references to *shāka* or leafy vegetables in the Nilamata Purana and Kshemendra's *Samayamātrikā*.[63] Those very poor, however, consumed wild vegetables like *utpalashāka* (Kashmiri *vopalhākh*) and *shanda* (Kashmiri *hand*). *Nadur*, or lotus stalk, as mentioned by Kshemendra as well as Kalhana, was a favourite dish of Kashmiris in the early medieval times, much as it is today.[64] We do not have any medieval Kashmiri cookbook to disclose to us the recipes of the *nadrū* dishes then prepared, but *nadrū* cooked with meat was surely one of the dishes that people enjoyed. But the most popular items of Kashmiri cuisine were, as at present, different varieties of meat and rice. This has been mentioned in Sanskrit literary sources and this is what the famous traveller Marcopolo confirms in his 13th century travelogue.[65] Dishes were prepared from the meat of ram (*mesha*), and perhaps, goat, literary sources tell us, and also birds, the preparations being highly spiced. Fried meat was one of the delicacies. According to Kalhana, the flesh of domesticated pigs (*grāmya shūkara*) came to be consumed towards the end of the 11th century. King Harsha for one is said to have enjoyed eating pork.[66] Meat soup was considered to be a great tonic. Fish was also a very popular item of cuisine and was consumed with great relish as a highly spiced dish by the rich as well as common people -- it was available abundantly, and in great variety in the numerous streams, springs and lakes of Kashmir. Fish broth (*matsya sūpa*) taken with onion and garlic was considered as an aphrodisiac, Kshemendra tells us as and so does Kalhana.[67] Garlic, however, was a forbidden article for Brahmins, though onion was a commonly cooked vegetable.

Fruit grew abundantly in ancient Kashmir, as testified by the Chinese traveller Xuanzang (Hieun Tsang). He mentions a long list of luscious fruits that the early Kashmiris cultivated and enjoyed, naming pears, plums, apricots, peaches and grapes as the principal fruits of the Valley.[68] Perhaps Kashmir grew excellent varieties of grapes – a fruit that appears to have been cultivated widely in the Valley, with almost every Sanskrit writer of Kashmir, Kalhana, Bilhana and Abhinavagupta included, singing its paeans effusively. A pen- portrait by Madhuraja Yogi shows the great aesthete of Abhinavagupta and philosopher sitting under a decorated canopy in a vine grove. According to the Nilamata, a festival called *Shyāmādevī Pūjana* was celebrated in praise of Shyāmā, a goddess supposed to be the personified form of the vine creeper, at the time of ripening of grapes,[69] amidst songing and dancing. Kshemendra mentions walnuts also,[70] which appear to have been grown in Kashmir from very early times. There is mention of pomegranates (*dādima*) in the Nilamata Purana as an offering to Vishnu.[71] Kalhana makes mention of *pālevata*[72] also, which according to Stein is the same as the apple[73] -- the fruit for which Kashmir is famous today throughout the world. Another fruit mentioned by Kalhana in Rajatarangini is *kapittha,* which he says grows in Kashmir only for a short time at the commencement of summer. Stein has come to the conclusion, and perhaps rightly so, that this fruit could only be the cherries.[74] In a place abounding in fruit, fish and fowl, it is natural for people to develop a taste for good food.

Honey was a popularly consumed item and used along with sugar as a sweetener of food. *Gud* (treacle) and *sharkarā* (white sugar) were also commonly used.. Among the condiments, saffron of course was the king; but turmeric, pepper (*maricha*), ginger (*marichādraka*) and aesfoetida (*hingu*) were commonly used for making cooked food tastier. Salt being an imported item was costly, but people of early Kashmir, like their modern successors, were great lovers of highly spiced dishes just to pamper their taste buds. Oil, as Kshemendra tells us,[75] was the cooking medium, though he does not mention any specific variety of it. In all probability, it must have been the mustard oil, which is the exclusive cooking medium for most Kashmiris even today. Aroma, of course appeared to compete with spices as the key to the secret of Kashmiri cookery.

Milk and milk products were widely consumed articles of food. According to literary sources, the use of *ghrita* or purified butter, *sarpis* or butter, *dadhi* or curd was commonly prevalent as also of milk preparations like *pāyasa* (*khīr*). *Ghrita* (purified butter) was used in fire sacrifices (*yajñas*), and also as a cooking medium for

special preparations, though not so commonly.

People of ancient and early medieval Kashmir seemed to have been very fond of chewing betel leaves (*tāmbūla*), a costly item that did not grow in Kashmir but had to be imported from distant regions of India. Offering betel lobes was a courtesy that was essentially shown to spectators at dramatic performances. Courtesans made a fetish of offering *tāmbūla* to their clients and the bawds at their residences. There are many references to the habit of chewing betel leaves among Kashmiris in Damodargupta, Kshemendra and Kalhana.[76] King Anatna was such a betel-leaf addict that he procured them at exorbitant prices from his supplier and almost emptied his coffers to pay him. He had to pawn his throne due to his mounting debts to him, but his queen came to his rescue and paid him off from the savings of her personal treasury, Kalhana writes.[77]

Drinking of wine seems to have been widely prevalent in early medieval Kashmir, restrictions on it in religious texts notwithstanding according to which drinking was forbidden for Brahmins as a class. Just as the people were not prudish in their attitude towards sex, so they were not hypocritical about drinking of wine, accepting it as a fact of life, though still regarding abstantion from it morally the right thing to do. Even the Nilamata Purana allowed it on certain occasions like *Navahimapātotsava* or the new snowfall day, *Mahīmāna* and *Irāmañjarī Pūjana*, a spring festival[78] Wine was prepared from the juices flowing from the home grown grapes as well as sugar cane, which were distilled, cooled and perfumed with flowers to make a delightful drink.. Perhaps this attitude was the result of the predominant influence of the Shākta and Kaula cults on the society for whom drinking wine was an essential part of the left-path ritual practices. For them being intoxicated was like being transported to a state of expanded consciousness in which the spiritual bliss of Shiva-Shakti union could be better experienced. The Brahmins of course were forbidden as a class to drink, but the common people seemed not to have any strict inhibitions about it. Liquor flowed freely like water at royal courts and the residences of the courtesans, who had to entertain their clients and the bawds as well as other parasites. Kshemendra in his *Samayamātrikā* describes an interesting anecdote of people bragging about their imaginary exploits under the influence of liquor.[79] Kshemendra and Kalhana both have expressed their disapproval of excessive drinking by the Tantriks and kings, of which there are many examples in Kashmir history. Among non-alcoholic drinks, Kalhana mentions *tuhina sharkaram*,[80] a delightful cold drink prepared from snow and white sugar and enjoyed during summer.

Furniture and Furnishings

About the life style of Kashmiris during the period of our review, the ignorance appears to be colossal, particularly about their material culture. The notion that they slept on the ground as they had no beds, and also that they had virtually no articles of furniture worth the name to furnish their houses with, has been allowed to prevail, as also a lot many other fallacies, because of the deliberately cultivated intellectual lethargy of attributing everything to Central Asia and its influence. Cultural influences are a two-way traffic, but in case of Kashmir, it has been turned into a one-way passage where only borrowings have been shown to take place. That is not, however, how things could have actually been. We have just to read our Damodargupta and Kshemendra, if we do not have the capacity to do original research on the ground, and we will get a totally different picture. Let us take the sleeping habit first. Works of both these authors[81] tell us that Kashmiris in the period of our concern slept on high, canopied beds (*vaitānika*s), or else on couches (*paryanka*) and cots (*shayyā*) complete with bed-sheets (*āstarna*), bedding (*shayana*) and pillows (*upādhāna*). They also mention the (*pādapītha*) or the footstool on which ladies sat for their toiletries, mirror in hand. Among the articles of furniture that people used, we come to know of the seat (*āsana, āsanda*) and thick cushions (*bhrisi*), which were commonly used to sit. There were also leather-cushioned couches in luxurious theatre halls for the discerning audience to appreciate a performance. A kind of carpet known as *pātalikā* was spread as floor covering and not just the humble reed-mat or simple grass–seats. We must admit, however, that this remains a largely unexplored area and an extensive research could yield many more facts to future researchers.

Entertainment and amusements

Music and dancing

Ancient Kashmiris have been portrayed in the Nilamata Purana as "ever sportive and joyful people, enjoying continuous festivities". Living in perfect harmony with their beautiful natural surroundings, "they played, danced and sang to express their joys, to please their gods and appease their demons", as Dr.Ved Kumari writes.[82] Music and dance, it appears, were an integral part of their life, the key to their cultural DNA. The Kuttanimata Kavya and Rajatarangini further testify to what the

Nilamata tells us about the immense popularity of vocal and instrumental music, dance and theatre performances among the people of early and early medieval Kashmir. Kalhana tells us that music was popular even among the Buddhist monks,[83] not to talk of the common masses. There were festivals galore that they celebrated – festivals that evoked devotion for the divine, festivals that celebrated the blooming of flowers in the spring, festivals that gave expression to the ploughing of the land and sowing of seeds, festivals related to the ripening of barley in the fields and harvesting the first crop of paddy during autumn, and even evoking the Bacchanalian spirit in the season when grapes ripened. About these, we will talk later, but here we only want to emphasize that not one festival was such that was not accompanied by music and dancing. Any pretext was enough for people to celebrate with snatches of a song and jigs of a dance - be it the birthday of a god or the new snowfall day. That was the nature of this delirious indulgence in music and dancing, the form and style? Naturally folk for the most part, but classical also at the concert halls and on the dancing floors, in accordance with the precepts of Bharata's *Nātyashāstra*.[84] The *Nātyashāstra* was a work most discussed and commentated upon in Kashmir and was an essential subject taught not only to elite scholars but also to the courtesans. Musical instruments of all the four types – *tata* (also *tantrī-vādya*) or stringed, *vitata* (also *avanaddha*) or percussion, *ghana* or cymbals and *sushira* or wind – were played upon. *Tantrī* (lyre), *patah* (drum), *muraj* (tabor), *mridanga* (double drum), *venu* (lute), *shankha* (conch), *ghantā* (bell) and *tūrya* (trumpet) were among the instruments most commonly used. Harmony between vocal and instrumental music was highly appreciated. In a 10th century pen-portrait of Abhinavagupta, Madhuraja, his South Indian disciple, shows him with his finger strumming the *vīnā*.[85] Abhinavagupta in fact had his own theory on music, not different from his thoughts on nature and objectives of aesthetics as such. Damodaragupta, refers to playing on the *vīnā* as a popular artistic amusement of his time.[86] Bilhana admires the women of Kashmir for their excellence in the art of dancing and acting.[87] From Kalhana we learn that many kings of Kashmir were great patrons of music and other arts. He refers to musical soirees and concerts held in glittering assembly halls of royal palaces.[88] King Kalasha had a craze for dancing girls and so had his famous son Harsha. Harsha was not used only a great connoisseur of singing and dancing, but also spent much of his time in watching musical performances and to personally instruct dancing girls on the stage.[89] It is no wonder, therefore, that one of the greatest masters of Indian music, Sharangadeva, who wrote the best treatise on Indian music, was from Kashmir.

Cocks fighting, Harwan

What the literary sources say about the popularity of music and dancing in early Kashmir society is corroborated by archaeological evidence. Thus, on a tile from Harwan we see three musicians, one playing a flute, another cymbals and the third on a pair of drums. Another tile shows a female musician playing on a drum hanging over her shoulders. Yet another tile depicts a female dancer in an actual dancing posture. She is shown waving a long scarf, which she holds in her hands. Relief panels from Martand also show musicians playing the flute. Theatrical tradition appears to have been rich and well established in Kashmir from fairly ancient times, as reference to *rangajīvin* or professional theatre groups in the Nilamata Purana indicates. A unique feature of theatrical performance in the age of the Nilamata was the idea of *prekshādāna* or "giving of a dramatic show as a gift".[90] It appears that these groups would give such "gifts" to entertain people on certain occasions and they in turn were supposed to sustain them by ensuring their livelihood. Though it is not known what kind of performances were given by them and what exactly were their themes, it can be said that they must have been enactments of mythological episodes, as the

performances had religious sanction. In Damodargupta's time, that is the 9th century, *shreshthi*s or big business magnates and the *vanika*s or merchants had emerged as patrons of the dramatic art. According to his evidence in the *Kuttanimata*, there were large spacious halls in Kashmir fitted with leather-cushioned seats and backrests.[91] Damodaragupta also refers to the performance of Shri Harsha's famous Sanskrit play *Ratnāvalī* in his time.[92] Kshemendra, himself a dramalist refers to the existence of theatre halls in Kashmir. In an interesting reference in his *Rajatarangini,* Kalhana compares fleeing armies to theatre-goers caught in a heavy downpour,[93] which suggests that the common people must have watched such performances in open-air theatres while the comfortable theatre halls mentioned above were meant only for the affluent.

Puppet plays also appear to have been a means of popular amusement. The *Kuttanimata Kāvya* refers to wooden dolls, which were manipulated by means of a mechanical thread (*yantrasūtra*) and made to dance and act.[94]

There were several other games and amusements also by means of which people in early Kashmir entertained themselves. Among these, garden sports appear to have been very popular, obviously because nature has gifted Kashmir with numerous gardens and beautiful parks. Festivals like *Irāmañjarī Pūjana* or *Ashokāshtamī* (to which reference has already been made), provided a plenty of scope for such excursions. On such occasions, as the Nilamata informs us, people would throng to the gardens and enjoy themselves with a variety of sports.[95] Such sports have been described at length in the Kāmasūtra and several other works. "Special meals taken in gardens in the company of friends and members of the family were a part of such sports", writes Dr. Ved Kumari. Young maidens could have their fun and enjoy water sports on the *Shrāvanī* festival, as mentioned in the Nilamata Purana.[96] The *Kuttanimata* also refers to such sports as a favourite form of amusement for young men and women, who would sprinkle water on one another with a *kāryantra* or syringe.[97]

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Kanduka krīdā or ball playing is said to have been one of the most favourite games of ancient India. It was very popular in Kashmir also, particularly among girls. Literary works like Damodargupta's *Kuttanimata* and Shyamalika's *Pādatāditaka* make mention of it.[98]

Chess and dice were among the favorite indoor games of the Kashmiri people from very early times. The Nilamata prescribes playing of dice on the Sukhasuptikā or Diwali night.[99] The Rajatarangini provides ample evidence of the wide prevalence in Kashmir of play chess as well as dice.[100] The *Kuttanimata* refers to chess as a popular pastime. Women, it informs us, also played chess along with men.[101]

Hunting was a favourite pastime of men, and was particularly popular among kings and princes. Some tiles from Harwan depict huntsmen on horseback chasing deer. The Rajatarangini is replete with references to it. Common people enjoyed watching wrestling bouts and animal fights.

We find interesting depiction of ram fights and cock fights on Harwan tiles. *Goshthi*s or social gatherings provided stimulating entertainment to culturally refined and intellectually inclined people in ancient India. There is evidence in *Kuttanimata Kāvya* that such gatherings took place commonly in early medieval Kashmir also. People "equal in age, learning, intellectual pursuits, character and wealth" would meet at the house of a "*nagaraka*" or man about the town. Kshemendra also refers to *sthāni*s or sitting rooms where friends would gather for conversations after having meals.[102] Respect was shown to gifted people known for their learning or their skill in the arts at such gatherings.

Educational system

The fact that ancient Kashmir was a world famous centre of learning has been mentioned so often that it hardly needs any repetition. Kashmiri scholars, renowned far and wide for their significant

contributions not only to Sanskrit literature but every branch of knowledge known to man at that time, were products of a society that valued learning more than anything else. There is ample literary evidence to show that in Kashmir it were not only the Brahmins but people belonging to the other castes also who had attained high proficiency in different subjects as they had access to good education. Praising Kashmiri scholars for their learning and the high level of their skills, Xangzang (Hieun Tsang) very clearly says that "they were well instructed."[103] Alberuni, too says in 1030 CE that Kashmir had become the centre of all Hindu sciences in his time and that Kashmiri scholars could accomplish any difficult task they took in hand[104]

On their part, kings of Kashmir also contributed to this renown by patronizing learning and being well learned themselves. King Jayapiada, for instance, invited scholars from outside to restore the study of Patanjali's *Mahābhāshya* on Pāninī's *Ashtādhyāyī* and was himself well versed in grammar,[105] His court teemed with famous scholars and literary men of the time, like Bhatta Udbhatta and Vāmana, great poeticians, Damodargupta, the author of *Kuttanīmata*, Manoratha , Chataka and Sandhimat, poets, and others, appointing them on high posts and paying astronomical sums to retain them. King Avantivarman (855-83) patronized poets like Shivasvāmin, the author of *Kapphinābhyudaya*. King Harsha (1089-1101 CE), himself exceptionally gifted, went out of his way to honour poets and scholars, as well as people skilled in different arts, at his court and bestowed all kinds of privileges to them. Courts of other kings also, barring a few, glittered with renowned men of letters.

Scholars who have studied the educational system prevailing in medieval India reveal that *mathas* had become the main institutions of education in the country. In Kashmir and Varanasi in particular there were a large number of *mathas* that had excellent arrangements for imparting education to students in various subjects. Attached to large temples, *mathas* in Kashmir were used not only as "feeding houses for the poor and the infirm and rest houses for pilgrims", but were also centres of cultural and educational activity. Thus, we learn from Kalhana that King Avantivarman (855-883 CE) appointed a well-known teacher to teach grammar at a Vaishnava temple he himself had constructed.[106] King Yashaskara established a *matha* that provided lodging facilities to students who came to Kashmir for education from Aryadesha (India).[107] Kshemendra presents a lively picture of one such *matha* in Kashmir where students from Gauda or Bengal came to study. These students, whose interesting caricatures Kshemendra draws, poking fun at their behaviour in his *Deshopadesha*,[108] were less interested in their studies but acted more as louts. Buddhist *vihāras* also served as centres of (Buddhist) learning.

In Kashmir and Varanasi in particular there were a large number of mathas that had excellent arrangements for imparting education to students in various subjects. Attached to large temples, mathas in Kashmir were used not only as "feeding houses for the poor and the infirm and rest houses for pilgrims", but were also centres of cultural and educational activity.

Apart from *mathas*, there were individual teachers also who privately imparted education to students by taking small classes in their houses. Kalhana tells us that Suyya, who had been found by a Shudra woman and brought up by a Shudra nurse, became a private teacher (*upādhyāya*) after learning the letters and taught young boys in the house of a householder.[109] Suyya, later accomplished a brilliant feat of engineering by regulating the course of the river Vitasta and rose to become a minister of King Avantivarman. King Yashaskara's great grandfather, Kamadeva, too had become a teacher after learning the letters and taught boys in the house of Meruvardhana.[110] When Abhimanyu, King Yashaskara's prime minister was dismissed, the ministers "rejoiced as boys when left by their teacher."[111] These references from the Rajatarangini provide important information about the way private individuals helped in imparting education to students and about the educational system in general in Kashmir in the 9th and 10th centuries. Who paid these professional teachers, the parents of the students or the householders who made arrangements for the classes in their houses or else the state, is not exactly clear from the above mentioned accounts, but surely the society sustained them in one way or the other. The examples of Suyya and Yashaskara, it may be noted, clearly

suggest that caste considerations or social status did not matter in medieval Kashmir as far as acquiring proper education or a job was concerned. Discovered by a Chāndāla woman while sweeping and nursed in the house of another Shūdra woman, Suyya first became a teacher and then the king's minister. Yashaskara, who was of a low descent and a pauper, but learned and wise, became the king of Kashmir.

A few things more about the educational system prevalent in early medieval Kashmir. It is not clear whether girls attended the family schools run by individual teachers or not, but the curriculum of the subjects they were taught indicates that they did have access to formal, and good, education. We have referred to this curriculum elsewhere in this article. Besides, in his *Vikramānkadeva Charita*, Bilhana has praised the women of his native land not only for their beauty or their skill in dancing and acting but also for their ability to speak in Sanskrit and Prākrit with as much ease as their mother tongue, and even composing poetry in these languages. The subjects that the boys were taught included, besides religious texts and philosophy, grammar, language, literature, history, poetics and dramatics, metrics, logic, astrology, medicine etc. Children's education started at an early age, as attested by Alberuni.[112] They first practiced writing on a black wooden slate, he writes.[113] Kshemendra too writes about children learning to write on a wooden board.

The examples of Suyya and Yashaskara, it may be noted, clearly suggest that caste considerations or social status did not matter in medieval Kashmir as far as acquiring proper education or a job was concerned. Discovered by a Chāndāla woman while sweeping and nursed in the house of another Shūdra woman, Suyya first became a teacher and then the king's minister. Yashaskara, who was of a low descent and a pauper, but learned and wise, became the king of Kashmir.

Travel and transportation

As in the rest of the country, several means were used by people in Kashmir in ancient and early medieval times for movement of men and goods from one place to another. The conveyances they used included boats, horses, carriages, palanquins and even elephants, a fact widely mentioned in the literary sources. Boats plying on the river[114] Vitasta formed the most important means of internal travel and trade. Kalhana feels excited at the splendour of busy "coming and going of ships" on the river, which is thoroughly navigable from the proverbial 'Khannabal to Khadanyar', all major towns being situated on its banks. The river was also connected with a network of other waterways throughout the length and breadth of the Valley. . The horse and the horse-driven carriage too were in frequent use for traveling and communication. From Xuangzang's (Hieun Tsang's) travelogue we learn that the 7th century Chinese traveller was received during his visit to Kashmir in 631 CE by King Durlabhvardhana's maternal uncle who had come with horse and carriage to escort him to the capital.[115] Incidentally, Durlabhvardhana himself the officer in charge of fodder for horses in the royal stable. King Ananta, Kalhana tells us, was so fond of horses that he was exploited by his horse trainers during the early years of his reign.[116] There are also several references to mounted troops (*ashvavāra*) in Kalhana's chronicle. And then, of course, we have the evidence of horsemen hunting deer appearing on the Harvan tiles. The elephant was also there but only to be used as aristocratic conveyance. And yet a fallacious notion spread by Alberuni was allowed to gain ground that Kashmiris were pedestrians and did not have any riding animals or carriages. Writes the noted author of *Kitāb-ul-Hind*: "The Kashmiris are pedestrians; they have no riding animals nor elephants. The noble among them ride in palanquins called *kutt* carried on the shoulders of men."[117] The palanquins were of course there but used only by the nobles and people belonging to the aristocratic class, as Kalhana himself tells us.

Religious beliefs

Having discussed how society was structured in Kashmir and what were the mores and manners that characterized its social life, let us now have a glance at the belief systems that inspired and guided the religious behaviour of the people of the land in the period of our study. As we have already said, the early Kashmiri society derived its civilizational ethos and its value system from a sense of harmony with nature. This gave rise to a spiritual and cultural climate in which different religious beliefs and different ways of worship flourished peacefully side by side. Even when a history

proper of the region was yet to be recorded, we find the religious fabric of Kashmiri life woven with mature strands of Vedic, Buddhist, Shaivite and Vaishnavite traditions, with a number of heterogeneous modes of worship, including the Nāga cult, exhibiting their well discernible patterns of influence. Not only did these different forms of belief and worship co-exist peacefully, they also impacted each other through osmosis of ideas and concepts. While chants of Sāmaveda still reverberated in Kashmir in the Nilamata era, the Vedic cult of fire-sacrifice started being replaced by the Puranic religious practices encompassing *pūja* or image worship, *vrata*s or religious observances, *utsava*s or festivals and *yātrā* or pilgrimages. During this very age, we observe popular Nāga deities like Nīla, Ananta, Takshaka, Sushruvas etc. entering the Hindu pantheon. In the period that followed, we notice Buddhist divinities like Avalokiteshvara and Tārā assume qualities and attributes of Hindu deities like Shiva and Durgā. At a later stage, the Buddhist concept of *shūnyatā* found its way into the lexicon of Kashmir Shaivism, though with a different interpretation. In the same manner, the Shaivite concept of universal consciousness provided the basis for the perception of reality to the Buddhist school of *Yogāchāra.*

Buddhism is said to have come to Kashmir in the 3rd century BC when Emperor Ashoka made it a part of his vast Mauryan empire and sent his emissary Majjhāntika to the region to spread the *dhamma.* We learn from the *Mahāvamsha* and *Ashokāvadāna* that Majjhantika had to contend with the powerful local Nāgas and their king Arvāla, and only after convincing them of his superior supernatural powers was he able to win them over to the Buddhist way of lif.[118] Buddhism supplanted the Nāga cult in Kashmir, but there is enough evidence to show that in its vestigial form it continued to survive for long after that. In the Kashmiri language, the very word *nāg* became came to denote a spring showing how deep its imprint was on the popular mind. Kshemendra and Kalhana both refer to *Takshaka Yātra* as a popular festival of their times in which crowds of singing and dancing people participated.[119]

Buddhism itself underwent a complete transformation in Kashmir after Kanishka convened the Fourth Buddhist Council there to "review, revise and reinterpret" its texts so that the purity of its canon could be preserved. It was a monumental event with 18 different sects accepting the conclusions of the Council, and this eventually led to the emergence of the Mahāyāna school. Mahāyāna was an altruistic doctrine with its emphasis on idealism, disinterested love, compassion for all and salvation for every living being. Mahayana deified the Buddha and the concept of divine Bodhisattvas came into being together with an entirely new pantheon of gods and goddesses. This had a tremendous appeal for the common people for whom the system of monastic life was a bit too bland and boring. Soon Kashmir became an important centre of the school, providing intellectual support to sustain it and sending missionaries and scholars from its soil to different lands in Asia for its propagation. Kashmir had its married *bhikshu*s long before anywhere else in the country. However, by 8th - 9th century, Buddhism started loosing ground to Shaivism and Vaishnavism, though it still continued to occupy an important position in the socio-religious life of Kashmir right till the advent of Islam. King after king and queen after queen kept providing liberal patronage to it, constructing *vihāra*s and *stūpa*s. At a time when the barbaric hordes of Mahmud Ghazni were putting thousands to the sword, Kashmiri artists were painting Buddhist murals in Western Tibet.

Despite their reverence for Buddha and liberal attitude towards Buddhism, the Karkota rulers of Kashmir were worshippers of Shiva and Vishnu. So were kings of the Utpala dynasty, who were ardent followers of Vaishnavism. With Buddhism receding to the background, Shaivism and Vaishnavism gained a dominating position in the society along with worship of other Hindu gods and goddesses. Festivals and rituals associated with their cults gained more popularity and impacted social life in many ways. This found expression in a renaissance of art and architecture. Actually, Shiva was a greatly popular deity from very remote times. According to Kalhana, Ashoka himself worshipped Shiva at the ancient temple of Shiva Vijayesha, when he came to Kashmir with a mission to spread Buddhism. He built two temples, Ashokeshvara and Shiva Bhutesha, dedicated to the God.[120] Jalauka, Ashoka's son according to Kashmiri tradition, was a staunch Shiva worshipper. The Pāshupata cult of dualist Shaivism was the earliest to prevail in Kashmir with its doctrine of *dukhānta* or elimination of misery and its core concept of *pashu*, *pāsha* and *pashupati,* forming the archetype for other Shaivite sects, but its practices had more to do with austere asceticism. Soon religious sects having their roots in Tantricism arose, including the numerous Bhairava cults that became widely popular and proliferated in the whole region from the fourth century onwards. Dualist in nature, these cults adored Bhairava as the fierce and wrathful aspect of Shiva who

could be appeased with blood sacrifice if necessary, but also worshipped as a benign guardian deity who granted boons and even bestowed ultimate salvation. Among the most popular were the dualist cults of Svachhandanda Bhairava and Amriteshvara Bhairava, which were later appropriated, together with their rituals, by the avowedly non-dualist traditions of the Āgamic Shaivism, which eventually gained ascendancy. With its Krama, Kula and Trika schools integrating with the *Spanda* or the Vibration school founded by Utpala and his disciple Kallata and the philosophy of *Pratyabhijña,* emerged what is known as Kashmir Shaivism today. As a system based on idealistic monism, it was first propounded by Vasugupta around the 9th century in his *Shiva Sūtras*, which became its seminal text. Abhinavagupta, Kashmir's greatest intellectual and spiritual genius, brought together all essential elements of these non-dualist schools under one exegetical plan in his *Tantrāloka*, synthesizing them in accordance with his profound vision of the oneness of God, Man and the World. The non-dualist Shaivism of Kashmir, or Trika as it came to be known in its integrated form, interiorized Āgamic rituals and practices and interpreted their tenets within its conceptual framework of absolute monism. The core concept of Kashmir Shaivism is that Shiva or the Supreme Reality is one, pure and undifferentiated consciousness which manifests itself as the diversity of the world and its phenomena through Shakti, his cosmic energy, who is inseparable from him. Shiva as universal consciousness is all-inclusive, as nothing exists apart from him or outside him. Recognition of one's identity as Shiva or universal consciousness is, according to Kashmir Shaivism, the ultimate experience of enlightenment and thereby of absolute freedom. An affirmative philosophy, it rejects the otherness of God and affirms the world as real with universal consciousness vibrating everywhere and in every thing. According to it, matter is but "a congealed form of unlimited consciousness". As Abhinavagupta puts it, universal consciousness has "contracted and "congealed" itself to "assume the forms of finite limited human beings."[121] This has implications at the societal level also, with Kashmir Shaivism disregarding all differences of caste, creed or gender and allowing everyone to enter into its fold. However, the non-dualist Trika philosophy did not become a mass religion, it remained confined to a small elite stratum of the society. Among the common masses, the Puranic form of Shiva worship, was more widely prevalent. It may be pointed out that the dualist Shiva Siddhānta, which has many elements in common with non-dualist Trika Shaivism, also had its birth in Kashmir.

Early medieval Kashmir was essentially the land of Tantra. Tantric esoterism, with its emphasis on the worship of Shakti or the energetic principle, developed as a dominant mystic cult probably around the 6th - 7th century and became widely prevalent at the popular level. Though Kaula and Krama schools of Āgamic Shaivism were also strongly Shakti-oriented, the belief that the ultimate reality is feminine in essence formed the basis of an independent system of religious faith called Shaktism, of which Kashmir, together with Gauda (Bengal) and Kerala, came to be known as a great centre. Goddess Shāradā, regarded as an embodiment of three manifestations of Shakti – Mahāsarasvatī, Mahālakshmī and Mahākalī -- was worshipped as one of the most revered deities of Kashmir from early times. The tradition of worshipping the Mother Goddesses in her manifestations as Tripurā, Rāgnyā, Sharikā and Jwālā seems to have formed the cornerstone of Kashmiri Hindu faith by the 10th century, as it does today with every family being oriented towards one or the other of these goddesses as its tutelary deity. Shakti or the Mother Goddess was identified with the highest reality and the inherent vital power of creation, and also adored in her role as the slayer of demons and upholder of the cosmic order. She was worshipped both in her peaceful and fierce forms, mostly for worldly rewards which she was expected to bestow as Mother of the Universe. She was also approached through esoteric rituals for attaining magical and meditative powers to control others or to overcome adversaries. Kahana's Rajatarangini makes several references to the use of *abhichāra* or witchcraft as a common practice by resorting to which kings in Kashmir are said to have been eliminated by their rivals or enemies.[122] Kalhana and Kshemendra both express their strong disgust at the sex orgies and drinking bouts that they saw followers of the left-path (*vāma mārga*) Shaiva and Shākta Tantric cults often indulging in during their times, creating havoc with the moral values of the society.

The esoteric rituals of the Shākta Tantras, like *chakrapūjā*, however, were actually supposed to have deep symbolic meanings, which not everybody had the capacity to comprehend. These rituals aimed at making a spiritual aspirant experience the blissful union of the two cosmic principles Shiva and Shakti as Ānanda Bhairava and Ānanda Bhairavī, or Kāmeshvara and Kāmeshvarī in the lotus of one's heart. As Kalhana's frequent references to *mātrichakras*[123] and the sculpted

images of Durgā and the *sapta mātrikās*, such as Brahmānī, Māheshvarī, Kaumārī, Indrānī, Vaishnavī, Vārāhī and Chāmundā discovered from Pandrethan show, Shākta *sādhana* was an integral part of religious life in early medieval Kashmir. Worship of *svayambhū* or self-existent *shrīchakra* on Hari Parbat in Srinagar has in fact been going on for centuries, indicating how deeply established the cult of Mother Goddess has been in the region. The *shrīchakra* or *shrīyantra* is worshipped as visual expression of the Great Goddess, holding it to be the linear representation of Shiva and Shakti in union. It is made up of nine triangles, four pointing upward and five pointing downward, located within an eight-petaled lotus, which in turn is placed within a sixteen-petaled lotus and the whole is enclosed within four gates of triple lines. In the centre of the *shrīchakra* is *bindu* or the central point, which represents Shiva- Shakti communion.

The long tradition of Shakti worship in Kashmir has, in fact, been a factor in women being looked upon as manifestations of the Divine Mother and the place of respect occupied by them in the family and the society.

"All the world's indigenous and ethnic religions have these features in common: they are nature-venerating, seeing nature as a manifestation of divinity: secondly, they are polytheistic and recognize many gods as many manifestations; the third feature is that they all recognize the Goddess, the female aspect of Divinity as well as male."

Alongside of Shiva and the Mother Goddess, Vishnu too has been a deity popularly worshipped in Kashmir in the period under our review. The space allotted in the Nilamata Purana to the places of pilgrimage and ceremonies like *devotthāna* dedicated to the worship of Vishnu is indicative of the great popularity enjoyed by his cult from the earliest of times. While King Pravarsena II, who built the capital city of Pravarpura, consecrated the image of Vishnu Jayaswamin in the 6th century,[124] Ranaditya built the Rānāswāmin temple dedicated to Vishnu , which poet Mankha refers to in his work in the 12th century[125] and Jonaraja describes the image as the chief deity of Pravarpura – "*Shrīpravarapura pradhāna devatā*" in the 15th century. The Karkota kings were from the beginning (8th century) ardent followers of Vaishnavaism and adored Vishnu as the family deity. They lent their royal sanction to the promotion of Vaishnavaism and built magnificent Vishnu shrines in different places in the Valley. Lalitaditya, the most famous of the Karkotas, built the splendid shrines of Vishnu Muktāswāmin at Hushkapura[126] and Vishnu Parihāsakeshava at Parihaspura.[127] The Utpalas who succeeded the Karkotas in the 9th century too were great worshippers of Vishnu and did much to popularize the cult. King Avantivarman, the first and the greatest king of the dynasty built the famous Avantiswāmin temple[128] to Vishnu, the deity he adored, with ruins of this magnificent temple still standing in Avantipur on the Srinagar-Jammu highway, reminding us of its glory.

As evidenced in the Rajatarangini, subsequent ruling families too expressed their admiration for the Vaishnava faith by constructing shrines and other pious buildings dedicated to Vishnu worship. The popularity of Vaishnavism contributed significantly to an upsurge in artistic activity, with the splendid images of four-faced Vishnu in black-stone being regarded as masterpieces of Kashmiri sculptural art. The four faces represent the four *vyūha* deities of the Pañcharātra cult, which too had its birth in Kashmir. The famous 10th century bronze panel discovered from Devasar depicting Vishnu's ten *avatāra*s offers another example. Kshemendra (11th century) wrote his famous *Dashāvatāra Charita* to sing of the glories of Vishnu's ten incarnations, including Buddha who had come to be regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu right from the age of the Nilamata. Interestingly, Ānandavardhana, the great exponent of the *dhvani* school in Sanskrit aesthetics wrote an invocative hymn to Vishnu's *Nrisimhāvatāra* (Man-lion incarnation) at the beginning of his *Dhvanyāloka*, though he was supposed to have Shaiva inclinations. Developments attesting to popularity of Vaishnavism in the Valley continued to be witnessed till the end of Hindu rule in Kashmir.

A notable feature of the Vaishnava faith prevalent in Kashmir was that it was not divided along sectarian

lines. On the other hand, it represented a synthesis of the different cults of Vishnu that existed in the country in those times. The worship of Rāma, as an incarnation of Vishnu though mentioned in the Nilamata, is not supported by archaeological evidence.

Apart from Shiva, Shakti and Vishnu, worship of other gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon was also prevalent in early and early medieval Kashmir. These included Sūrya, Ganesha, Laksmī, Kālī, Kārtikeya, Agni, Gangā etc., besides a host of local gods, as the available literary and archaeological evidences suggest. Most of the local gods and goddesses later came to be looked upon as manifestations of Shiva, Vishnu and Durgā or Tripura Sundarī. In fact, the predominant outlook that inspired the religious behaviour of the common masses in early medieval Kashmir was that of allowing different modes of worship exist side by side cordially and happily. In his introduction to Edwin Muir's '*Life of Mohammad*', well-known historian Ram Swarup has quoted Prudence Jones, spokesperson of the UK Pagan Federation to have observed:

"All the world's indigenous and ethnic religions have these features in common: they are nature-venerating, seeing nature as a manifestation of divinity: secondly, they are polytheistic and recognize many gods as many manifestations; the third feature is that they all recognize the Goddess, the female aspect of Divinity as well as male." [129]

This in nutshell also sums up the religious outlook of the Kashmiri society during the period under study. The attitude of reverence for different deities as manifestations of divinity prevailed more pervasively at the folk religious level, allowing for a wide range of propitiation rituals and ceremonies related to gods and goddesses as well belief in a whole pantheon of demonology. In addition to these, the system of life-cycle rituals 'connected with childbirth, naming, attainment of puberty, marriage, death and death anniversary', which are imperative for Hindus everywhere to perform, also formed the foundational base on which the social structure stood.

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Art

Bilhana's Lyrical Masterpiece Chaurapañcāshikā and its Pictorial Illustrations

Geetika Kaw Kher

What I find greatly interesting about Bilhana's *Chaurapancāshikā*, is the fact that while it is a masterpiece of Sanskrit lyrical poetry, full of charm and beauty, it has also lent itself to a series of extremely sensuous and beautiful visual depictions constituting a new style in Indian miniature painting. As an undergraduate student, I came to see reproductions of the striking illustrations of the *Chaurapañchāshikā* manuscript in the collection of Gujarat Museum Society, Ahmedadad. At that time I was pretty impressed to know that a poem of 50 or more stanzas has given its name to an important painting style considered as a benchmark in the development of early Rajasthani and in particular the Mewar School of painting. It was only later that I read the poem and found out that the poet Bilhana, who had composed these charming verses, was a Kashmiri. I could not but marvel at the extremely tender and passionate verses, full of longing for the beloved, which also had tremendous potential for creation of visual images in the mind of the reader. The unmistakable charm, the beauty of description and the bold declaration of love at the time of approaching death made this poem unique among the love poems I had read earlier.

As an undergraduate student, I came to see reproductions of the striking illustrations of the Chaurapañchāshikā manuscript in the collection of Gujarat Museum Society, Ahmedadad. At that time I was pretty impressed to know that a poem of 50 or more stanzas has given its name to an important painting style considered as a benchmark in the development of early Rajasthani and in particular the Mewar School of painting.

About the poet and his creation:

Kashmir was already a world-renowned centre of Sanskrit learning and literature when Bilhana appeared on the scene, with a good number of great poets and scholars having made significant contributions to it.. It had a rich and long tradition of literary creativity patronized by the rulers and supported by a highly appreciative audience.

Admiring the literary and cultural fecundity of his native soil, Bilhana says:

"Poetry and saffron are the two beautiful products of Sharada Desha that are not found in such profusion anywhere else."

Bilhana has given us a brief account of his life in the 18th canto of his historical *mahākāvya*, the

'*Vikramānkadevacharita*'. Bilhana informs us that he left Kashmir and reached Kalyana in South India and enjoyed the patronage of Vikramaditya VI of the Chalukyan dynasty when Kalasha was ruling in Kashmir (11th CE). He traveled widely in the country, he reveals, from Mathura and Varanasi in the north to Gujarat in the west to Dhar in Central India and up to the South Indian kingdom of Western Chalukyas.

Chaurapañchāshikā, is a work consisting a little over 50 verses composed in prison and recited at the spot where the poet was supposed to be executed; but it reveals nothing biographically about him. The verses, constituting poignant recollections of the blissful time the poet spent in the company of his lady love, hardly form a narrative or a logical sequence. Each verse is complete in itself, and evokes a visual portrait of the amorous play. It is only after reading the entire work that we become conscious of a certain continuity, mainly due to the uniform meter used by the poet. Buhler[i] suggests that there is a need to rescue Bilhana's compositions from the oblivion, as he possesses a unique spark of poetic fire seen rarely.

The story goes that Bilhana, a Kashmiri poet, is engaged as a tutor for the princess. Soon love blossoms between the teacher and the student and they get secretly married. On coming to know about their secret love, the furious king orders Bilhana's execution. On being asking to pray to God before his death he, the love-lorn poet repeats these 50 verses one by one, which boldly express his love for his beloved and his ardent desire to have her as his wife in the next birth even.

Dr. Ved Kumari Ghai[ii] in her scholarly, critical and extremely informative work '*Kashmīr kā Sanskrit Sāhitya ko Yogdān*' gives an account of this *khandakāvya*. According to her, three versions of the poem's text are extant: the Kashmiri recensions, the Southern recension and the Northern one. In the Southern version the work has been presented as '*Bilhana- kāvya*' and the name of the poet's beloved is given as Shashikala or Chandrakalā, daughter of Virasimha, the king of Mahilapattan. The story goes that Bilhana, a Kashmiri poet, is engaged as a tutor for the princess. Soon love blossoms between the teacher and the student and they get secretly married. On coming to know about their secret love, the furious king orders Bilhana's execution. On being asking to pray to God before his death he, the love-lorn poet repeats these 50 verses one by one, which boldly express his love for his beloved and his ardent desire to have her as his wife in the next birth even. On hearing the verses, the princess feels devastated and is on brink of committing suicide. The king is moved and not only sets Bilhana free, but also marries his daughter to him.

Scholars have different views regarding the authenticity of the verses that have reached us. Tadpatrikar[iii] in his edition of the Panchashika observes that only five verses are common in all the three versions of the poem and hence only these verses might have flowed from Bilhana's pen and the rest could have been added by later poets. Looking at the vast number of interpolations in Indian texts, the argument sounds quite plausible but the proof given in not entirely satisfactory. There is something in the verses, which points to a certain connection between them, yet the possibility of Tadpatrikar's view being right cannot be entirely ruled out and it is left to researchers in Sanskrit poetry to find out more about it.

Aesthetic merit and universal popularity of Chaurapañchāshikā:

The popularity and the mass appeal of this poem is established by the fact that it was translated into Gujarati in 16th CE as '*Shashikalā Viraha Pratāp*' and also was rendered by the Jain poet Jnanacharya into hybrid Sanskrit. Poet Vitthal translated it into Marathi and the poem has been published in a Marathi work '*Kavyaitihas Sangraha*'. It was also translated into Hindi around the same time. The English translation by Barbara S.Miller[iv] and a free translation by Mathers[v] titled *Black Marigolds*, which in itself is a beautiful piece of literary work, points to its appeal and literary value beyond linguistic and geographical borders.

Regarding the tremendous popularity of this *khandakavya*, Kawthekar[vi] says that apart from *Meghaduttam* of Kalidas, no other lyrical poem has been traditionally as popular as *Chaurapanchashika*. Interestingly, the main *rasa* in both is '*vipralambha shringāra*', in which the element of pathos plays a very important part. While *rati* remains the *sthāyī bhāva* of the work, its poetic beauty is enhanced at by delineation of *vyabhichārī bhāva*s, such as feigned anger, subtle violence during love making and so on. Graphic and vivid

description of the physical charms of the beloved and the nature of the lovers' expression of love during their intimate moments together puts the *kāvya* in the same league as most Sanskrit love poems written before and around the same time. Regarding the extremely sensuous verses of Bilhana, Tadpatrikar says that his depiction of *shringāra* is quite in line with the lyric poems of that time and is comparable to Kalidasa's classical verses in *Meghadūtam*. Though its expression is unreserved and free, it nowhere appears to be shallow or merely tantalizing for the reader. The use of suggestive overtones or aspects of *vyañjanā* power gives a certain depth to the meaning and makes the love poem aesthetically delightful. The psychological aspects of the element of sensuousness prevailing throughout the poem are aptly described by Deborah B Levine[vii] in the following words:

"Bilhana's heroine is the archetypal Indian woman, a psychological rather than a sexual symbol, created to be mastered, enjoyed, absorbed. She is as imprisoned in her relationship with her lover as she is physically confined as the poem suggests to the women quarters of her father's palace. She exists to respond to nothing but his idea of her passion."

It is through the female figure of Shashikala or Champavati, or by whichever name one calls the heroine, that Bilhana is able to give his innermost desires a tangible form. While describing her physical, emotional and psychological state, he actually betrays his own craving for her and his sense of loss in separation from her.

Pictorial illustrations of some selected verses:

The illustrated *Chaurapañchāshikā*, with its brilliant and bold style of execution, roughly dating to the 16th century, has been attributed to the Mewar region by Miller on the basis of similarities with the style of other manuscripts from the region. In this series of 15 folios, one can find emergence of a new style, trying to declare its independence from the rigid conventions of Jain miniature painting. Gone is the extended further eye, seen in almost all Jain paintings. The collection gives a lyrical feel, which can be discerned in the later Pahari as well as Rajasthani paintings related to *nayaka–nayikā bheda* and other poetic themes.

The paintings of this series follow the Jain tradition of combining a verse and its illustration with the space usually divided into two sections by an architectural element. What is interesting, the names of both the protagonists, Champavati and Bilhana in this case, are boldly written in yellow on top of their respective portrayals. The theme is depicted with strong, confident lines, brilliant colours and bold patterns but with a controlled workmanship. The background, lively and emotionally charged as it is, has not been painted in realistic manner, but rendered in bright yellows, deep reds and dark greens, which enhance the passionate mood depicted in the paintings.

Illustration 1

All the verses start with word '*adyāpi*', meaning 'even now', and that is a unique feature of the poem. The repetitive use of the word creates a great effect and emphasizes the intensity of the poet's passion even though he is about to be executed and death stares him in the eye. The pleasure he derives from recalling his passionate past is unmistakable.

Verse 1:
Adyāpi tām kanakacampakadāmagaurim
plullāravindavadānām tanuromarājīm/
suptotthitām madanavihvalalālasāngīm
vidyāṁ pramādagalitām iva cintayāmi//

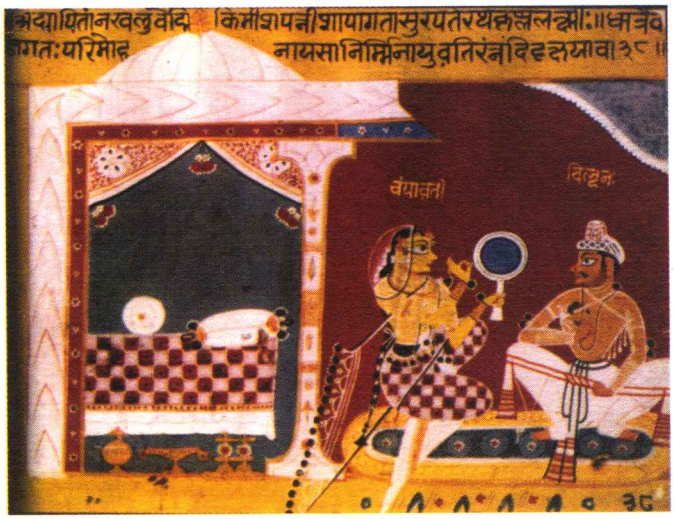
Even now
I regret her
Gleaning in garlands of gold champaka flowers,
Her lotus face blossoming,
The line of down delicate at her waist
Her body trembling and eager for love
When she wakes from sleep-
Magic somehow I lost in recklessness
(Translated by Barbara S.Miller)

Even now
My thought is all of this gold-tinted king's

daughter
With garlands tissue and golden buds,
Smoke tangles of her hair, and sleeping or waking
Feet trembling in love, full of pale languor
My thought is clinging as to a lost learning
Slipped down out of minds of men
Labouring to bring her back into my soul.
(Free translation of the same verse by Mathers)

The next verse describes in detail the facial expressions of the princess after a pleasant night of lovemaking. Her expressive and elongated eyes, mentioned in the verse, can be so vividly seen in the paintings too. The eyes reflect naughtiness and seem to hint at the secrecy of the love affair. The transparent drapery covering the upper part of Champavati's body reveals more than it hides, leaving a lot to the imagination of the viewer.

Illustration 2



Verse 5:
Adyāpi taṁ suratajāgaraghūrṇamāna
Tiryagvalattaralatārakakadir-ghanetrām/
śṛngārasārakamalākararājahamsīm
vrīdāvinamaravadanām usasi smarāmi//

Even now,
I remember her
Deep eyes, glittering pupils
Dancing wildly in love's vigil,
A wild goose
In our lotus bed of passion
Her face bowed deep with shame at dawn
(Translation by Barbara S.Miller)
Illustration 2
Even now
I bring her back to me in her quick shame,
Hiding her bright face at the point of day;
Making her grave eyes move in watered stars,
For love's great sleeplessness wandering all night,
Seeming to sail gently, as that pink bird,
Down the water of love in a harvest of lotus.

(Translatation by E. Powys Mathers)
There is a twist in the last verse of the poem that is quite interesting and points to the seriousness of the poet's declaration. It becomes clear that he values nothing in the universe than the time spent with his beloved and given a chance he would want to prolong the enchanting moments for eternity.

Adyāpi nojjhati Harah kila kālakūtaṁ
Kūrmo bhibharti dharnīm khalu prishthabhāge /
Ambonidhirvahati dussahavādavagnim
angīkritaṁ sukṛitinah paripālayanti //

This verse roughly translates as:
Never does Hara (Lord Shiva) give up the kālakūta **poison**
And always the great tortoise bears the earth on his back
The ocean always bears the unbearable vādava **fire**
So do noble souls abide forever by what they have once undertaken.

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Language

MEMORY: COUNTERMEMORY

Shantiveer Kaul

One interesting, and still evolving, aspect of Kashmir's insurgency is the employment of a linguistic shift as an ideological paradigm. Before we attempt to understand the implications of this phenomenon, it would be useful to arrive at tentative definitions of some generic and specific terms that any such exegesis would necessarily employ.

Language, besides being the primary survival tool of a society, is (also) universally understood as an articulation of culture. Culture, in turn, has been characterized as what Ashley-Montagu calls 'man's adaptive dimension' (M.F. Ashley-Montagu, Culture: Man's Adaptive Dimension). Early signal systems differentiated into the patterns of ordinary language as well as various visual symbols such as gestures and icons, with varying sets of properties. With socialization succeeding the development of this efficient communication system – speech – came geographical relocation or dispersal and differentiated social organization. This further evolved into what we now come to understand as culture. An overall culture as an attribute of the species, and several specific cultures unique to each well-differentiated social organization. Besides anthropological considerations geography, political history and commerce have contributed to this 'uniqueness' through the ages. The shift from a Paleolithic to a Neolithic culture ten thousand or more years ago, characterized by a change from nomadic hunting and food gathering existence to an agricultural one which was relatively stable must have greatly assisted in the development of language. This 'geographical anchor' is of fundamental importance to the development of a differentiated social organization and, consequently, language.

The shift from a Paleolithic to a Neolithic culture ten thousand or more years ago, characterized by a change from nomadic hunting and food gathering existence to an agricultural one which was relatively stable must have greatly assisted in the development of language. This 'geographical anchor' is of fundamental importance to the development of a differentiated social organization and, consequently, language.

Although the study of language has come a long way since the time of Gottlob Frege and even Ferdinand Saussure, we are still trying to unravel its complexities. A quick reading of the following is quite instructive:

'In acquiring a language, we dissect reality in ways that are codified in the patterns of our language' (B.L. Whorf, Science and Linguistics)

'Do not confuse statements about things with statements about the language used in the statements. In other words, distinguish between object language and metalanguage' (I.A. Richards, Powers and Limits of Signs)

'The map is not the territory' (Korzybsky, quoted by Richards, op. cit.)

'I insist that words are totally absent from my mind when

I really think' (J. Hadamard, The Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field)

'Antithesis is a theft of language: I borrow the violence of current discourse for the sake of my own violence, of meaning-for-myself' (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes)

'The sense of an expression is not private, but public property' (G. Frege, The Thought: A Logical Inquiry)

'An utterance partitions a set of alternatives. It specifies different aspects or distinguishing features of the perceived referent' (D. Olson, Language and Thought: Aspects of a Cognitive Theory of Semantics)

What appears to be a welter of contradictory statements is actually a set of notions about language, each valid and valuable within its own context, its particular angle of perception. We shall employ each one of these notions during the development of this exegesis, mostly within their own contextual framework and occasionally in a cross-contextual mode. This use would be purely illustrative in nature since none of these 'notions', by virtue of their being just that, have canonical existence. Language, in any case, is inadequate and often ambiguous. This is partly because of its nature. It is a finite system of symbols based on classifications of experiences, not on raw experiences themselves. It is selective: a given sentence bringing only certain aspects of a situation to attention. The subtextual, intertextual and metatextual import of this sentence is also contained within a larger selective or classificatory mode. At the same time the given sentence may be true or false, or both (ambiguous) or none – without violating the constraints of its own grammatical or semantic rules. These rules, or the linguistic code, are the basic operating framework of language and the matrix of cultural development. The architecture of ambiguity of language contains the 'creative' and the political use of language. Interestingly, I.A. Richards has identified some other special uses of language – among them the advertisers special use and the pornographer's special use.

These rules, or the linguistic code, are the basic operating framework of language and the matrix of cultural development. The architecture of ambiguity of language contains the 'creative' and the political use of language. Interestingly, I.A. Richards has identified some other special uses of language – among them the advertisers special use and the pornographer's special use.

What concerns us here is the special political use of language. Referring to the use of language in quite another context, John B. Carroll observes, "...people can use language to persuade us of notions or ideas that are true (in some sense of 'truth'), to draw our attention to things we would prefer not to attend to, or to evoke emotions and desires in us that no amount of direct experience of itself, would necessarily lead to. The remedy that has been repeatedly urged but seldom effectively applied is to alert students, by teaching, to the dangers and misuse of language. The general inadequacy of educational programs that are undertaken to this end (and the lack of easy ways to evaluate their effectiveness) is perhaps one of the reasons language is still so much mistrusted ... It is small consolation that perverted uses of language have become so brutal and obvious – in television commercials, for instance – that (as we are told) children no longer believe advertising of any kind. The danger is that they will no longer attend to any verbal message." What Carroll says in the context of pedagogic classroom teaching could easily be the critique of the politician's use of language and its effect on the electorate in present day India. The politician, however, operates within his linguistic-cultural code. It is when code mixing or code superimposition is deliberately employed that the political use of language dons a far more sinister mantle. Code mixing is a tool for subverting an emplaced culture and substituting it with a subculture. The argument that a code-mixed communication is a homogenized communication is not only spurious but also specious. It is an appropriation, decontextualization and rape of language; as well as culture.

"I made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat;
But the fools caught it
Wore it in the world's eyes
As though they had wrought it.

Song, let them take it,

For there's more enterprise

In walking naked."

- W.B. Yeats, 'A Coat'

The decontextualization of language went through three stages in Kashmir. This was preceded by a fourth, amorphous stage: In the manifesto drawn up for Naya Kashmir (more than fifty years ago), language teaching of Kashmiri from primary education level was envisaged and even emphasized. By some convoluted logic, Kashmiri was introduced at the postgraduate level only some years ago. In an atmosphere where an entire population was 'preliterate' in its own mother tongue, the stage was set for the manipulation of language. A scientific study of the language, its origin and development, grammatical structure and etymology was dispensed with. We were face to face with the rather strange situation of studying the literature of a language without studying the language itself; having convinced ourselves (and deluded the world) in thinking that oral knowledge of a language was knowledge enough.

The first stage of decontextualization, only partly conscious, was that of code fractionation. Modern spoken Kashmiri has linguistic propinquity with Persian, Turkish, Arabic and Sanskrit matrices. Fractionating it to exclude the Sanskrit matrix was part subconscious, part acculturative and part deliberate. It existed as an artifice to constitute a selective oral tradition; the limited repertoire of written texts was largely exempt from it. But it found its way, insidiously, into musical texts where evidence of definite and deliberate tampering exists. An example was the interchangeability, later substitution, of the words 'Shiv' and 'Sahib'. These 'secularizations' have been routinely overlooked and several such versions are secure in the archives of Radio Kashmir. It must, however, be mentioned that this organization has for long been the only reason why Kashmiri literature flourished even in the absence of mass readership. It must also be said to the credit of writers in this language that they were not directly responsible or involved in this code fractionation in the centuries gone by. As is predictable in all such cases, the conscious component of this fractionation originated in religious discourses and the famous Friday addresses by leading political lights. This process was further facilitated by the emerging 'new elite' – bureaucrats, political newbies and well-heeled businessmen.

It was the muezzin or the moulvi who was the initiator of the second stage of decontextualization. This was the stage of code mixing, where a large cache of words from other matrices was infused into the linguistic substrate left over after the first stage. This process was largely facilitated by the import of a large number of moulvis from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. That this code mixing was overtly political in nature is common knowledge in Kashmir. Institutionalizes tableegh (religious instruction), the spawning of religious educational trusts across the valley and public donations of foreign origin at largely attended functions to these trusts and other institutions of tableegh is also a matter of record. A focus was provided by the All India Conference, at Srinagar, of 'Allah waleys' whose professed political or denominational stance may or may not have been germane to the process that had already become widespread. The code mixing witnessed during the late seventies and early eighties was still largely restricted to mosque sanctums although a disturbingly large number of children were spouting a kind of mongrel language in routine social intercourse. The imported moulvi impressed the native with his qi'rat, his theological knowledge and expansive manner and chastised him for his poor understanding of Islam informed by 'corrupting' Sufi influences. Communication was, per force of necessity, in Urdu – the Persianized variety which, incidentally, is not the spoken language of U.P. or Bihar – and people were encouraged to use Persianized, or Persian equivalents for perfectly legitimate Kashmiri words.

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The third stage of decontextualization began in the still little understood days of 1989-1990, when a whole new 'linguistic mythopoeia' overtook and replaced the

existing one, or whatever was left of it. Mohammed Yusuf Shah suddenly became Syed Salahuddin, and then the floodgates opened. You could pick up any name from the history of the wars in Islam and you were sure to find a latter day Kashmiri 'avatar' nearby. The original foursome of JKLF terrorists Hamid, Ashfaq, Javed and Yasin (the so called HAJY group) was the sole exception in this grand game of re-christening people. Where you had a Salahuddin, could the 'desert fox' Omar Mukhtar be far behind? Or Hasan-ul-Bana, Jamshed Shirazi, Babar Badar, Hilal Haidar? The names are too numerous for recall. The re-christening of person-names was followed in quick succession by accelerated re-christening of place names, not unknown in Kashmir – the difference now lay in the re-christening of even 'secular' names to new ones redolent with the heavy scent of Arabian Nights or Ottoman aroma; even Iranian imagination. A Khomeini Chowk in good old Bemina or the numerous 'abads' that sprang up in places that were familiar till the other day left even the novitiates befuddled! 'Double-decker' names and portmanteau identities became de rigueur. Close on heels of this came the act of usurping entire historical narratives or even contemporary happenings, and 'managing' those where active rewriting would have been difficult. Even as history was being rediscovered, current happenings were refracted through the prism of a construct called Jagmohan. The proper name became an adjective as well as a verb, and a flesh and blood person was imbued with preternatural abilities and demonic imagination.

Decontextualization of language is akin to theft of identity. Language is what gives man his being and also belonging – for language is memory. To construct a countermemory may seem easy, but is actually not. Is it easy to undo in a decade or two, what has been wrought in millennia? Very soon, the memory – sought to be erased, but actually only put in the cellar – will crawl back from its subterranean exile. The birds will come home to roost.

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A paragraph from One Hundred Years of Solitude by Gabriel Garcia Marquez puts things in stark perspective: "It did not occur to him that this was the first manifestation of a loss of memory, because the object had a difficult name to remember. But a few days later he discovered that he had trouble remembering almost every object in the laboratory. Then he marked them with their respective names. So that all he had to do was read the inscription in order to identify them. When his father told him about his alarm at having forgotten even the most impressive happenings of his childhood, Aureliano explained his method to him, and Jose Arcadio Buendia put it in practice all through the house and later imposed it on the whole village. With an inked brush he marked everything with its name: table, chair, clock, door, wall, bed, pan. He went to the corral and marked the animals and plants: cow, goat, hen, cassava, caladium, banana. Little by little, studying the infinite possibilities of a loss of memory, he realized that the day might come when things would be recognized by their inscriptions but that no one would remember their use... Thus they went on living in a reality that was slipping away, momentarily captured by words, but which would escape immediately when they forgot the values of the written letters."

Author's note:

A slightly different, and longer version of this paper was originally written in 1996 at the behest of my late lamented friend Bhushan Bhat, and published by him in the periodical Trumpet, which he was editing at that time.

Essay

Padmasambhava - a Pan-Asian Avatara from Kashmir?

Niraj Kumar

Padmasambhava, popularly known as Guru Rinpoche and the Second Buddha among the Himalayan people, has left indelible marks of his personality across the sacred geography of Asia. He is said to be from Oddiyana, a supposedly magical kingdom often mentioned as a sacred *pītha* in Tantrik literature. Oddiyana is variously said to have been located in Kashmir or in the Swat Valley .Though, in recent days, historians from Orissa are claiming Oddiyana to be the same as the modern-day Odisha and have fortified their arguments in favour of this claim after the inauguration of Padmasambhava Monastery on January 12, 2010. The monastery was consecrated by the Dalai Lama at Chandragiri in Gajapati district. There has been a spurt of writings suggesting that Padmasambhava might have been born in Sambhal (presently Sambalpur) in Oddiyana, presently Odisha. This assumption is employed to explain the occurrence of nomenclature of mystical land of Shambala in Padmasambhava's biography and subsequent Buddhist tantra. But, most historians put Oddiyana in the northwest of India. The most famous biography of Padmasambhava, written by Yeshe Tsogyal, mentions Oddiyana as located to the west of Bodh Gaya. Oddiyana is the land of big ponds where plenty of large size lotuses bloom. Orissa is in the east of Bodh Gaya. Xuangzang (Huein Tsang), the famous Chinese pilgrim has mentioned Oddiyana as situated in northwestern India. Patrul Rinpoche, an authoritative teacher of the Nyingma tradition expresses the view that Oddiyana lies in the region between Chitral, Gilgit and Swat, where big ponds are to be found, and locates it in Kashmir. Apart from these narratives, the

fact that Padmasambhava transmitted the ideas of the Sarvastivadin School makes Kashmir the most probable centre of Padmasambhava's early activities. Padmasambhava's various hagiographies contain sufficient material to establish Kashmir as the inspirational landscape in his sojourn across the Himalayas. We shall see in the later section of this essay how Padmasambhava carried with him many of the ideas, which had their source in contemporaneous tradition and philosophy of Kashmir, across the Himalayas.

Born in the eighth century, he is regarded as the patron saint of Tibet and founder of the oldest Vajrayana sect, Nyingma. He was invited by the powerful Tibetan King Trisong Detsen (740-98 A.D.) after being advised by the Nalanda abbot Shantarakshita to pacify 'evil forces' there. Padmasambhava was instrumental in the founding of the first Buddhist monastery at Samye. But he did not limit his activities to the construction of this monastery alone, he also extended his influence across the Tibetan plateau and beyond. It is believed that he defeated 'the negative forces', spirits and demons and converted them into protectors of the Dharma. This narrative points to the appropriation of the pre-existing belief system to propagate the Great Tradition of Buddhism, which many a contemporary scholar has termed as the 'Buddha-isation' of Tibet.

Padmasambhava's influence on the Himalayan laity is immense. He is the protector of Dharma, bestower of prosperity and the Guru to ward off evil forces. He is propitiated more than any other Buddhist saint is after Buddha and is rightly called the Second Buddha.

Padmasambhava is associated with most of the pilgrimage sites across the Himalayas. His name is is invoked in prayers and in the rituals of folk religion. People believe that by invoking his name thus one can achieve the fruits one desires.

Padmasambhava is credited with having introduced the practice of *Dzogchen* (seeking to examine the fundamental nature of mind directly, without relying on visualizations and images) and the discovery of hidden scriptures or "*terma*" by later practitioners or the *tertons*. The world known text, The Tibetan Book of the Dead is such a *terma* discovered by the *terton* Karma Lingpa. Similarly, more than 150 biographies have been discovered by various *tertons*. The most popular biography was discovered by the *terton* Ye-she-Tho-gyal. The name of this book is *Padma Ka-hi-thang-yig* (Padma's Precepts). It is also called *Ke-rap Nam-thar Gye-pa* (Complete Birth History). The biography was published by W.Y.Evans-Benz with an introduction by Carl Jung in 1936 as 'The Tibetan Book of Great Liberation'. Padmasambhava's influence on the Himalayan laity is immense. He is the protector of Dharma, bestower of prosperity and the Guru to ward off evil forces. He is propitiated more than any other Buddhist saint is after Buddha and is rightly called the Second Buddha. Astonishingly, his influence in shaping the psyche of Tibet as it is today, and its neighbourhood, as compared to many other Vajrayāna teachers and translators has not been fully explored. This has something to do with the ascendance of the Kālachakra and Karma-Kagyu sects following the political upheavals in Tibet. There has been persistent résistance to the introduction of Nyingma rituals in the practice of Tibetan Buddhism by the dominant Gelukpa sect followers. This has adversely affected the emergence of Padmasambhava as the greatest Buddhist missionary of Asia who accomplished in a single lifetime his objective of creating an integrated sacred space spaning across Asia.

Padmasambhava is the only historical figure to have appropriated a site to Buddhism through the taming of its 'local demons'. The practices of the previously existing Bon religion were amalgamated by him with the new Great Tradition. Similarly, the sacred sites of the Shaivites were appropriated by him by conjuring the myth of the victory of Samvara (Demchok) over Shiva in a battle at Kailash. The Buddhist sacralization of the Himalayas was achieved through invention of similar legends. Padmasambhava's name is associated in one way or the other with these transformatory cognitive practices. Padmasambhava is associated with most of the pilgrimage sites across the Himalayas. His name is is invoked in prayers and in the rituals of folk religion. People believe that by invoking his name thus one can achieve the fruits one desires. He has even been credited with the invention of the Mongolian 'fire cult' and of non-sacrificial ritual practices in India and beyond. People invoke Padmasambhava's name during everyday activites like hunting rituals, blessing of the yurt among the Mongols, warding off diseases, starting a new venture, calling of a deceased person's soul etc. Padmasambhava can indeed be called the true "cultural

superman" of the Himalayas, the epitome of sacredness.

Padmasambhava – the Patron Saint of Kaliyuga

The number one thousand seems to have a peculiar significance in Indian belief systems and traditions. It is the most powerful number influencing this-worldly affairs. Valmiki writes in his Ramayana that he did penances for *sahasra* (1000) years. Buddha narrates one of the 32 marks of a great man as having a wheel with one thousand spokes on one's feet. Sheshanaga, who balances the universe on his head according to Vaishnava mythology, has one thousand hoods. *Sahasrāra*, said to be the the highest *chakra* in esoteric practices is perceived as a lotus having one thousand outspread petals. In the Valmiki Ramayana, Gautama Rishi cursed Indra for having seduced his wife to have one thousand *yoni*s on his body. Māra raised one thousand arms to frighten Siddhartha.

When Buddhism was the dominant religion in history, the Buddha *Nirvāna* calendar was in vogue for religious ceremonies, while the the Shaka calendar promoted by the Kushanas (78A.D.) was in use for civil administration. There were other prominent calendars like Mahavir Nirvāna calendar and Vikram Samvat calendar with zero point in 57B.C. In Buddha Nirvana calendar, the zero point is 544 B.C., and the advent of the millennium (*sahasra* years) is palced in the year 456A.D.

Since an event of such a high significance was taking place for the first time in Indian civilization (there is little chance of the existence of such a calendar, which requires a refinement of civilization and knowledge of astronomical phenomena, earlier, it must have caused a lot of excitement and fear among the laity as well as the rulers. The question that begs to be asked is whether the Age of Buddha was passing away, paving for another new age. The calendrical time does introduce simultaneity of experience, in particular when the society is ritual based and rituals are calendar based. Such a circumstance is ripe for a strong socio-political movement. Benedict Anderson puts the emergence of nationalism and the 'imagined communities' on only these two factors: simultaneity of experience due to emergence of newspapers after spread of printing technology and enumeration. Interestingly, the Indian society was poised for a greater change at this first millenarian movement in written history due to these two factors: high degrees of enumeration that encompassed ritual universe and the simultaneity of experience due to the prevalent usage of calendars based on astronomical events.

I am certain that the emergence of Puranas at this juncture of time was a kind of millenarian movement across Indian geography. Shaiva and Vaishnava bhakti movements arose first and the idea of *avatāra* and salvation spread like wildfire. This calendrical moment might be the source of inspiration for the revival of the sagging Hinduism during the later Gupta period and the succeeding dynasties. Re-emergence of Hindu sects and multiplication of divine figures as the source of salvation in the coming new age were characteristic of this period.

The end of the millennium led astronomers to rework calculations. Aryabhatta put 499 AD (421st year of the Shaka calendar) as the date of zero *ayanāmsha*. This became the reference point for preparation of subsequent *pañchāngas*, which were necessary for any kind of ritual activity. Thus, 499A.D. became the zero point for new astronomical as well as astrological calculations. This intensified the sense of the coming of a new age among the laity. The end of first millennium and reconstitution of zero *ayanāmsha* coincide too closely and there is a possibility of the former's influence over the latter event. It is pertinent to mention that Aryabhatta was a teacher in famous Nalanda University where the best of Buddhist works were composed and compiled, attracting scholars from far and wide. The event of the completion of the first millennium must have generated debates in the Nalanda premises and Aryabhatta, being a mathematical genius reworked the *nakshatrachakra* and fixed the zero date of cyclic motion of *nakshatra* orbits in the year 499A.D. as per the requirements of his times. In later centuries, one stream of Buddhist believers overcame this crisis by proclaiming Padmasambhava (8th century) as the Second Buddha, the Buddha of the New Age; but this school remained confined to the high northern altitudes alone.

The number *sahasra* (one thousand) has a wider significance in the Indic traditions. When the first millennium of the Buddha's *Mahāparinirvāna* calendar commenced, there was enhanced creativity in the realm of literature, composition of both Puranic and Tantric texts and the postulation of the new *yuga*s. Aryabhatta fixed the year 499A.D. as the zero *ayanāmsha* year and all astronomical calculations were to be made from this particular point onward. There was lot of millenarianism in the air. New cults and new gods appeared. Different Hindu sects vied with each other to occupy the space about to be vacated by the Buddhists in their millenarian perceptions. To most of the people

steeped deeply in the tradition of a ritual universe governed by calendarical time, the *yuga* of the Buddha seemed to be passing away.

The problem of millenarian shift was compounded by the news of the invasion of the White Huns. The Huns destroyed the Taxila University in 455A.D., one of the greatest monastic institution for Buddhist studies. The Guptas were the patrons of Buddhist institutions. Hordes of Huns mounted on their horses destroyed Indian cities as far as Bengal. Even Pataliputra, the capital of the Gupta Kingdom, was sacked. There was a perception that the Huns were enemies of the Buddhist sects. This was strenghtened by the rise of Mihirkula, who, it is believed, converted to Shaivism and widely persecuted the Buddhists.

The Buddhists must have felt the heat and they began a counter-narrative. The idea of *chakra* (cycle of time) was appropriated in the Tantrik ritual usages like *ganachakra*, *chakrasamvara* and later *kālachakra*. The millennial age had passed. Each age ought to have a new *avatāra* to stem over the looming crisis. Buddhist discourse centred on new emanations of Vajradhara. Wrathful deities were being imagined which could save the Buddhists from imminent disaster. The ideas of *Kaliyuga* and *Kalki avatāra* spread from time to time among each vying sect. The word *kalki* is derived from *kalkin*, meaning 'white horse'. Interestingly, the Huns were known as *Shveta Hūna* in Sanskrit and they were well versed in horsemanship. The appearance of the Huns and their wrathful marauding of *Jambūdvīpa* might have caused this spurt in creative imagination with regard toTantrik deities.

Both, Hindu as well as Buddhist sects developed rituals to propitiate a new avatāra called Hayagrīva. Hayagrīva is a horse-headed deity. It is not a mere coincidence that the Kalki avatāra was predicted to be a warrior mounted on the white horse.

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The white horse had captured the imagination of Hindu as well as Buddhist thinkers. In the ritual of *ashwamedha* sacrifice by kings to attain supermacy, white horses were preferred to be sent around. In the Puranic literature, one of the rare objects that emerged while the *deva*s and *daitya*s were churning the milk-ocean was Uchchaishravas, a white horse .The white horse also symbolized the sun.

In Buddhist history, the white horse has often been employed as a metaphor for purity, renunciation and spread of the *dharma*. Kanthaka, Siddhartha's horse was pure white. It is this horse that Siddhartha rode while renouncing the world to attain enlightenment. There is a White Horse Temple or Baima Temple at Luo Yang, China built in 68A.D.by the Chinese Emperor to commemorate the arrival of Kashyapa Matanga on a white horse to spread the *dharma* in China. There is also a White Horse Pagoda in China built as a memorial to the loyal horse of Kumarjiva, the great scholar who is credited with translation of many Mahayāna *sūtra*s into Chinese.

Thus, when a *yuga* was perceived as having passed, literature around righteous *avatāra* associated with the white horse began to appear. The people believed that the *dharma* shall be revived and protected by the new *avatāra*. Hayagrīva, an *avatāra* of Vishnu with a human body and a horse's head, pure white in colour was worshipped as the god of knowledge and wisdom. It is said that Kamban, Ramanuja and Shankaracarya had visions of this horse-headed deity.

In *Samvara* and *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, we see the Hayagrīva appearing as Buddha's wrathful aspect. Padmasambhava's hagiographers imposed every characteristic of Hayagrīva on him. In the famous biography written by Yeshe Tsogyal, Hayagrīva and Padmasambhava intermingle with each other. Hayagrīva is the fierce form of the Avalokiteshvara and is believed to liberate all and sundry; so does Padmasambhava liberate sentient beings from the fear and evil spirits.

Padmasambhava is shown as having been taught by "an ordained *dākinī*, who dwelt in a sandalwood garden, in the midst of a cemetery, in a palace of skulls. In secret she also granted to him the Hayagrīva initiation, which

gives power to dominate all evil spiritual beings." Further, while residing in the kingdom of Mandarva, (his consort from the Sahor kingdom), Padmasambhava is shown assuming the form of Hayagrīva. He performed magical dances on the surface of a boiling lake, and all the Nāgas inhabiting the lake submitted before him. The biography describes how he took Mandarva "to the cave at Avalokiteshvara's heaven, and for three months and seven days made prayer and offerings to the Buddha of Long Life. Then Amitayus appeared, placed the urn of boundless life on the heads of Padma and Mandarva, gave them the nectar of immortality to drink, initiated them, and conferred upon them immunity from death and birth until the end of the *kalpa*. Padma was transformed into Hayagrīva and Mandarava into Vajra-Vārāhī." Both were blessed with the power of immortality and transformation into a rainbow. In the same episode, it is mentioned that when both of them were burnt on the king's command, suddenly a lake emerged with a blooming lotus supporting Padmasambhava and Mandarva in Hayagrīva and Vajravārāhī form.

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There is also an episode of the cowherd guru, in which a cowherd attained the form of Hayagrīva after being initiated by Padmasambhava and meditating on the mantric syllable *hum*. The cowherd developed a protuberance resembling the head of the Hayagrīva .

Hayagrīva is believed to be endowed with eight superhuman faculties. The structural correspondence with the eight forms of Padmasambhava and Hayagrīva is evident. Interstingly, in the biography by Yeshe Tsogyal, there is mention of the destruction of the famous Vikramshila University. The White Huns had destroyed every Buddhist institution and the monasteries in the Magadha region and in all probability, Vikramshila followed the fate of the Taxila and Nalanda, both destroyed by the Huns during Skandagupta's time. The Buddhists needed an *avatāra* in the form of Hayagrīva, since the horse was the most potent threat to the survival of Buddhism.

The first *sahasrābda* had ended and new astronomical years had commenced. Padmasambhava was assumed to be an *avatāra* by the Buddhists due to his explioits in many regions and hence conferred the title of the Second Buddha. It is not a mere coincidence that this Second Buddha acquired the characteristics described in the literature on *avatāra*. He bade farewell to his activities in the human world, mounted on a horse. Padmasambhava remained engraved in popular imagination as the immortal *avatāra*, the Hayagrīva emanation of the Buddha, by propitiating whom, one can keep away from oneself evil spirits and negative forces. The mantra for Hayagrīva underscores this relationship.The mantra is as follows:

"Hrīm padma dātri Hayagrīva hulu hulu hung phat!"

This assumption resulted in overcoming the threat posed by the multiplying Hindu sects which vied with each other to regain the religious space in an imminent non-Buddhist future during the 6th century.

Hayagrīva is worshipped by the Nyingmapa sect as a protector of the *Dharma* and the highest deity. Hayagrīva enjoys high popularity among Mongolian shepherds, who offer him consecrated horses, possibly because Mongolia is a land of the powerful horses. In Tibet, Mongolia and rest of the Himalayas, Hayagrīva and Vajravārāhī are also linked to many sacred sites having caves and rocks. Many Buddhists still use these caves for intense spiritual practices.

Padmasambhava and the sacred sites

The Tibetans believe that the Chakrasamvara (Demchok) or the Great Circle of Bliss transcending both *samsāra* and *nirvāna*, is a representation of their body, mind and speech in an inner and outer geography. This is the homologisation of thought structure with the physical landscape. Even human anatomy, cosmic structure, legends, historical figures and rituals get enmeshed in this kind of homologisation. Japanese philosopher Toshihiko Izutsu has used the concept of "synchronical structuralisation" to explain such multi-polar and multi-layer structure whereby the concepts of one realm are transposed spatially into another

realm.

In a similar fashion, the believers have created structural correspondence with Demchok's body and the known geography. The body of *Chakrasamvara* is represented by Mount Kailash in the east, speech by Tsa-ri in Central Tibet and mind by Lapchi. Nowadays, Mount Kawa Karpo in the southeast Tibet, now a part of Northwest Yunnan, is revered as the eastern most abode of Shri Chakrasamvara, also known as Khorlo Demchok in local parlance. Some sights are more central/popular as pilgrimage sites and generally the

Padmasambhava evolved into an increasingly legendary character and his name came to be often associated with most of the *neri* (power) places across the Himalayas. Yeshe Tsogyal mentions in Padma's biography that Padma "preached the *Dharma* to gods, *Nāga*s, *dākinī*s, and demons in their own respective languages and realms, and to men in many parts of the human world like China, Assam, Ghasha, Trusha (near Samala), and elsewhere in India, and in Persia. He built many temples and monasteries, 824 of them in Tibet. In Devachan, the heaven of Avalokiteshvara, he constructed a stupa of crystal. "Because of having done all these things, he was given the name *Padma-sambhava.*"

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In the same work, the biographer mentions that Padma also went to the "Country of Asafoetida in Khotan, where he remained for 200 years and established the Sūtra, Mantra, and Mahāyāna forms of Buddhism. Between the Khang-kar-te-say Mountains (near the Nepal frontier in southern Tibet) and Tri-shi-trik in China, Padma hid 108 large works, 125 important images, five very rare essences (of secret doctrines), the sacred works of Buddhism and of the Bonpos, and books on medicine, astrology, arts, and crafts. Similar catches were made by Padma in Nepalese caves and temples. Along with the texts, he buried such worldly treasures, magical weapons, and food as would afford support to the *tertons* who should take out the texts and give them to the world. Altogether, Padma is credited with having hidden away texts and accessory objects to the number of ten million."

The *Chakrasamvara Tantra* dates back to the 8th century when Padmasambhava was active across the Himalayas. Stories were invented that Chakrasamvara defeated Shiva on Mount Kailash. Since then, all sacred sites of Shaivites became sacred to Demchok. This is the mythical explanation of appropriation of categories from the early Shaivites. It is this fusion process that made Naropa to claim later that Buddha, Shiva and Jina are one and the same. As Padmasambhava is believed to be the emanation of Demchok, all such places also have legends about Padmasambhava's visit or meditational retreats.

Before Padmasambhava, the sacred places of the Buddhists were limited to the northern plains of India like Rajgir, Varanasi, Bodh Gaya, Kushinagar, Nalanda. Buddhisīm spread in later centuries to higher altitude as well as latitudes. The sacred places multiplied manifold after the introduction of Tantric practices since Tantra required the drawing of the *mandala*, a diagramatic representation connecting different worlds structurally. The cave was considered a *mandala* since the pilgrim made entrance and exit in clockwise direction, thus forming a sacred circle .The *mandala* can be depicted across topography, within body or literally, in engravings, sculpture or paintings showing the correspondence between the realms of immanence and transcendence.

The *pītha* tradition emerged as an extension of the *mandala* doctrine. The body parts of the deity were believed to sanctify different landscapes. After Buddha, it is Padmasambhava who is credited with creating so many sacred sites. Tibetans believe that the Himalayan landscape and the varying topography has been caused by Padma's miracles. Padmasambhava is supposed to have taken almost every route that connects India to Tibet and China, Burma, Persia, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and China to Mongolia. He left footprints or prints of other parts of his body in a kind of resemblance with the *pītha* tradition .

Origin of Samvara Pītha

The noun *samvara* is derived from the verb *samvri*, meaning to bind, to conceal. Indrabhuti, a commentator on the *Chakrasamvara Tantra* sees the manifestation in this world of Shri Heruka (*samvara* deity) and his *mandala* as a process of emanation. The *Chakrasamvara Tantra* mentions in its 10th chapter that the process begins from the physical manifestation of Vajradhara from the Mount Sumeru and culminates in the manifestation of *Chakrasamvara mandala* of Heruka and his consort embedded in the landscape of Jambūdvīpa.

Non-dual union with Shri Heruka is essential for the realization of the *trikāyā*, which is equivalent to *Buddhajñāna*. In *Chakrasmvara mandala*, the central deity is the couple Shri Heruka and Vajravārāhī. They are surrounded by four kinds of *yoginīs*. Together these deities constitute the central *jñānachakra* of the *mandala*. They are surrounded by the three concentric wheels-the blue coloured mind-wheel (*chittachakra*), red coloured speech-wheel (*vākachakra*) and the white coloured body-wheel (*kāyāchakra*). Each wheel consists of eight deity couples. Thus, the wheels contain 24 couples, a number that finds reflection in the narrative of Kāpālika, Dattatreya and Matsyendranatha. The *mandala* palace is surrounded by the "eight great charnel grounds", which seems to be borrowed from the pre-existing Siddha/Shaivite sects. Each charnel ground is linked to one of the eight sacred mountains and particular species of trees.

The sites associated with Guru Rinpoche are dedicated to the cult of Samvara Tantrism and constitutes the major pilgrimage network in Tibet. The three leading sacred sites of the Samvara and his consort Vajravāhinī namely, Ti-se (Kailsash), La-phi and Tsari are the oldest systematically sacralized mountains, each having legendary presence of Padmasambhava. The sacred geography of the vajra-kāyā **doctrine related to India was relocated to the Himalayas only after appearance of Padamsambhava.**

There is multiple-level referentiality in symmetrical correspondences. The practitioner's body is linked to the outer cosmos via the three wheels of the *mandala*, which are correlated to the triple world cosmology. There are three worlds of heaven, earth and the underworld (a realm to which the Nāgas belong, often finding mention in Buddhist mythology and cosmogony). Buddha has three bodies or *trikāyā*) – *dharamakāyā* (reality body), *sambhogakāyā* (enjoyment body) and *nirmānakāyā* (manifestation body). Each of these 24 points of the *chakarsamvara* is correlated to 24 sacred sites scattered around Jambūdvīpa. Each one of these 24 goddess also correlates to a body part. Each of the wheels is arranged hierarchically along the body's central channel, *avadhūtī*. The mind-wheel occupies the head and uppermost part of the torso. The speech-wheel corresponds to upper torso and vocal organs. The body-wheel corresponds to lower torso, legs and feet.

The central deity Heruka, has a set of three mantras: a longer *mūlamantra* (root mantra), a shorter *hridaya mantra*, and a still shorter *upahridaya mantra*. The *Chakrasamvara Tantra* has 51 chapters, which seem to correspond with Sanskrit alphabets, just like the *Shiva Sūtra* revealed to Vasugupta consisting of aphorisms corresponding to the Sanskrit alphabet.

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Prominent sacred sites of Padmasmbhava

Some of the sacred sites associated with the legend of Padmasambhava are described below:

Meili Snow Mountain

This range is located in Zhongdian, 10 kilometers northeast of Deqin County of Yunnan Province, China, also termed officially by the Chinese authorities as Shangri-la. The mountain sits on the border of the Yunnan Province and Tibet, where the three famous rivers, namely the Yangtse (Jinsha), Mekong (Nu) and Salwen (Lancang) flow. These three great rivers of Asia

run parallel to one another though separated by high mountain ranges. After this confluence, the rivers diverge and empty in different directions. Salween empties in the Indian Ocean through Burma, Mekong into the South China Sea through Vietnam and Yangtse into the East China Sea at Shanghai. There is another triad of holy peaks, which is believed to be blessed by Padmasambhava, who radiated his divine light onto the range and named the three peaks after the three Bodhisattvas.

The southern peak Jambeyang is a manifestation of Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom. The eastern peak Chanadorje represents Vajrapāni, the Bodhisattva of Wrath, while the northern peak, Chenrezig, the highest of the trio, symbolizes Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

These three holy peaks are believed to be "patron saints" of the Tibetans. Tibetans believe that pilgrimage to the holy triad three times in life can bless one with all the boons.

But, the most sacred in the region is the Kawagebo Peak, the highest in Yunnan Province, rising to height of 6,740 meters. It is still a "virgin peak" for no one has ever scaled the top. Tibetans revere it as the eastern most abode of Shri Chakrasamvara, also known as Khorlo Demchok.

Kawagebo became the patron saint of the Nyingma School after encounter with Padmasambhava. According to the local legend, Kawagebo was an evil spirit with nine heads. Padmasambhava defeated him and made him the protector of Tibetan people. In visual representations, Kawagebo is shown to ride a white horse with a sword in hand. This reminds one of the presumed avatāra of the Kaliyuga.

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Tsari

The Tsari mountain lies at the south-eastern end of the Great Himalayan range. It is one of the last peaks (5,735 m) before the Yarlung Tsangpo river (Brahmaputra) cuts through the range in the world's deepest gorge. The mountain is surrounded by the tributaries of the Subansiri River which drain into the Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh to the south of the mountain. This is the place of the Pure Crystal Mountain, and one of the three main mountain pilgrimage sites in Tibet. It is also one of the 24 great sacred places described in esoteric Buddhist texts. After every 12 years, in the Monkey Year, this mountain becomes a site of pilgrimage. Here lies the mind- *mandala* of Shri Chakrasamvara. And it is also a principal abode of the sky dancers, amongst whom Khandroma Dorje Phakmo is supreme. There are various secret caves here where Padmasambhava is believed to have meditated. Obeisance to Amitāyu Buddha and Hayagrīva is made here. Its identification as Charitra or Devikota includes it among the important sub-continent-wide mountain power- places.

Tīrathapurī

The only other point of pilgrimage considered essential for the traveler in the Kailash region is Tīrthapurī, located on the Sutlej River. The traditional order of the pilgrimage is first to circumambulate Manasarovar, then Kailash, and then to go to Tīrthapurī, the monastery containing the Guru's footprint and dig for healing stones .This is almost always the final stop. Perhaps this has something to do with the soothing waters of the shallow hot springs, where weary travelers can relax, soak their feet and contemplate on the adventures they have undergone in Guru Rimpoche Monastery (a.k.a. Tīrthapurī Monastery), whose assembly hall enshrines stone footprints of Padmasambhava and his consort Yeshe Tsogyel. Also here is a sacred cave used by the Guru.

Tirthapuri is best known for being a sacred place of Padmasambhava and his consort Yeshe Tsogyel.

Tarboche

Saga Dawa is the most important annual festival of Mt. Kailash. During this time, the giant flagpole is ritually taken down and the prayer flags along its length replaced. During the flagpole ceremony, as the pole's tip

is raised and pointed towards Gyangdrak Monastery in the east, monks of that monastery perform a special ritual. After the *tarboche* (flagpole) is fully upright, Tibetans scrutinize its position for omens. If the column is ramrod straight, all will go well. If the pole leans toward Kailash, local inhabitants will suffer famine, disease and perhaps premature death. If the flagpole tilts away from the mountain, great alarm is generated.

Tarboche's importance is linked to the sanctity of the nearby cemetery of Drachom Ngagye Durtro, situated on a ridge east of the flagpole. Gotshangpa, first explorer of Kailash, and Guru Rimpoche are known to have blessed the site. The latter predicted that the trunk of an exceptionally tall, 'self-originating' (*rangjung*) tree would serve as the flagpole.

Bhutan

Paro Taktsang Monastery

Taktsang is one of the holiest places in Bhutan. The monastery is perched on a high granite cliff overlooking the northern Paro Valley. This place is especially venerated because of its association with Guru Padmasambhava, who is said to have flown to Paro Taktsang in the form of Dorji Drolo, mounted on a flaming *dākinī*-tigress in 747A.D.

It was in Zahor that Padmasambhava was first addressed as Lord Padmasambhava, the Lotus-born Guru, and was praised as the Second Buddha.

Here, he is said to have been burnt along with his consort Mandarva. But, a lake was formed and both of them emerged on lotus flower with the form of Hayagrīva and Vajravārāhī.

According to the Neyig of Taktsang, compiled by Lopen Pemala, there are nine holy caves (*phug*) around Taktsang, namely:

1. Machiphug 2. Singyephug 3. Pelphug 4. Drolophug 5. Yoeselphug 6. Gadigphug 7. Choegyelphug 8. Kapaliphug 9. Phagmoiphug

Lhasa

The hidden lake temple of the Dalai Lamas behind the Potala called Lukhang is dedicated to Dzogchen teachings and has murals depicting the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava. It is believed that Padmasambhava also visited the Garu nunnery of the Sera Monastery situated in the north of Lhasa.

Rewalsar, Mandi

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Samye

Shantarakshita, was invited by the Pala King, Dharmapala to take part in a peace mission to Tibet. Tri-song Detsan (755-797 A.D.), was son of a Chinese princess and the Emperor of Tibet. Shantarakshita advised the Tibetan King to invite Padmasambhava. A mission was sent to Nepal to extend the imperial invitation. Padmasambhava subdued "the negative forces" and consecrated the site upon which Samye Monastery, Tibet's first Buddhist academy is built.

Sikkim

Padmasambhava visited Sikkim and converted the Kanchenjunga peak into the keeper of Sikkim. He concealed several sacred scriptures there. Sikkim is regarded as sacred as Padma's abode at the Copperplate Mountain at Tsari.

Pemayangtse

This Monastery of Sikkim is considered to be the premier monastery where "Zangdopalri", a multi-tiered three-dimensional wooden structure symbolizing the copper mountain palace of Guru Padmasabhava, is placed.

Lake Khachopelri

Pilgrims believe that the lake fulfills one's all wishes and is a site blessed by Guru Padmasambhava. The lake Khachopelri resembles the footprint of Guru Padmasambhava when viewed from above and is revered as a lake sacred to Tārā as well

Tashiding Gompa

This is one of the holiest *stūpa*s in Sikkim. It was built on the spot where an arrow shot by Padamsambhava is believed to have fallen.

Chugthang

It is believed that there is a footprint of Padamasambhava on a sacred rock here.

The Four Sacred Caves of Sikkim

Padmasambhava is believed to have originally "opened" 108 caves in Sikkim, but closed 104 of them, leaving the remaining four for pilgrims. These four caves surround Tashiding, the spiritual centre and heart of Sikkim on four directions. These are:

i) The Hidden Cave in the East at Sharchok Bayphuk
ii) The Secret Cave of the Dākini, or Womb of the Dākinī, in the South at Khandro Sangphug (South Cave) where there was hot spring water coming out on the side of the river which is known as Guru Padmasambhava's holy place
iii) The Cave of Great Bliss in the West at Dechen Phu
iv) The Cave of the Heart of the Deity in the North at Tashiding -Cheminingpo

Padamsambhava visited Zangskar in Ladakh where he is said to have dwelt in the Kanika and Sani monasteries. The bushes of the cemetery at Sani are considered as sacred. There is a Guru Rimpoche cave in Ladakh, known as Urgyen Dzong. The cave of Padamsambhava is located in the Takthok Monastery at a distance of 50 km from Leh.

Nepal

Padamsambhava is believed to have gained enlighjtenment in Nepal. One of his famous consorts was the Shakya Princess. He is still highly revered in the region.

Maratika caves

Halesi Mahadev has been a sacred site for the Hindus as well as the Buddhists. There are three caves here representing the three eyes of Shiva. Buddhists call these caves Maratika. It is believed that Padmasambhava and his consort Mandarava gained enlightenment and became immortal here. There is another cave Yanglesho where Buddhists believe Padmasambhava fought with snakes and turned them into stones. Padmasambhava is also said to have atained the *mahāmudrā* here.

Pharping

Padmasambhava went to Parphing, which lies in the hills to the southwest of Kathmandu. This is the place of enlightenment at Yanglesho (Pharping) in the Kathmandu Valley. There is a very famous Buddhist temple dedicated to the feminine aspect of Buddha, known as Vajrayoginī, the Divine Mother.

High on the mountainside above Parphing is the little cave of Lang-le-sho where Padmasambhava and his consort, the Nepalese princess Shakyadevi, lived together.

There is a handprint of Padmasambhava against the rock face of the mountain here. To this day, the handprint can be seen outside the entrance of Lang-le-sho cave, where he and his consort Shakyadevi attained simultaneous enlightenment.

Caves of the Mustang Valley

In Mustang, near the town of Lo Manthang, various deities supposedly appear from walls. It is believed that these are the *termas* hidden by Padamsambhava, who are revealed only to a righteous person.

Ladakh

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Behind the Hemis Monastery in Ladakh, there is a sacred cave where Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogye are believed to have meditated and a granite rock with their footprints on it exists.

Mongolia

Ayui-yin Sume

Ayui-yin Sume, meaning "Temple/Monastery of the

Caves" is one of the most important Buddhist institutions in Southern Mongolia and was built around a cave complex. Hayagrīva, is the deity represented at Aui-yin Sume. There are five sacred caves of the five *dākinī*s here, which scholars have traced. People believe that Padmasambhava engaged in Tantric practices at this place with five *dākinī* sisters, each dwelling in a different cave. Padmasambhava left a print of his left foot near the Hongyang Cave. There is a *dākinī* footprint in front of the Cave of Târâ. It is said that Padmasambhava made a statue of himself with his own hands, which is the major pilgrim attraction at Ayui-yin Sume.

The "womb caves" of Padamsambhava

There are series of "womb caves," sanctifired by Padamasambhava across Asia. "Womb caves" have narrow entrances that make visitor to either squeeze or crawl through. This is considered as a purificatory rite essential in various pilgrimages. The Maratika Cave where Padamsambhava is believed to have attained enlightenment is such a womb cave. Similar caves with legendary presence of Guru Rinpoche are the caves of Gur Du Monastery in Amdo, Ayui-yin Sume Monastery in Mongolia, and the caves near the pilgrimage sites of Mt. Kailash and Mt. Amnye Machen in Tibet, Tarap in Dolpo, Gaden monastery in Central Tibet, Bhutan. In Jammu and Kashmir, the Ādakunwārī cave in the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine is such a "womb cave".

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Association of Padmasambhava with "womb caves" is an interesting aspect of the sacralization of the sites across the Himalayas. Since Padmasambhava is believed to be lotus-born, he was not born of an earthly human womb. He is believed to have reincarnated as an eight-year-old child appearing in a lotus blossom and discovered by the Oddiyana king, Indrabhūti.

Octads, pentads and triads

In the narrative of Padmasambhava, there is greater emphasis on numerological correspondences. There are recurrences of octads, pentads and triads. Padmasambhava is credited with having eight Indian gurus belonging to eight different schools. In the prayers offered to him, he is addressed as a Heruka (someone naked with respect to *samsārik* things) accompanied by eight *mātrikā*s or Mother Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. Padmasambhava is said to have taken eight forms or manifestations representing different aspects of his self. These are: Guru Uddiyāna Vajradhara, the holder of the thunderbolt; Vajradhara Guru Shākyasimha of Bodh Gaya or Lion of the Shākyas, who learns the Tantric practices of the eight Vidyādharas; Guru Padmarāja of Uddiyana, the Lotus Prince, King of the *Tripitika*s; Guru Padmākara, Lotus-arisen, the Saviour who teaches the Dharma to the people; Guru Sthiramati of Kashmir, the Intelligent Youth, who gathers the knowledge of all worlds; Guru Sūryabhāsa or Sūryarashmi, who illuminates the darkness of the mind through the insight of Dzogchen and who holds a *khatvānga* which points towards the sun: Guru Vajra , the fierce manifestation of Vajrakilaya (wrathful Vajrasattva) known as "Diamond Guts", the comforter of all; Guru Simhanāda of Nalanda University, the Lion of Debate, his various aspects are linked to different regions like Nalanda, Kashmir, Zahor, China, Tibet, Bhutan, Uddiyyana, and Bodh Gaya.

In the biography by Yeshe Tsogyal, there is mention of a dialogue between Mandarava and Padmasambhava. When Mandarva made an inquiry about Padma's parentage, he replied:

"I have no parents. I am a gift of the voidness. I am the essentiality of Amitābha and of Avalokiteshvara, born of lotus in the Dhanakosha lake; and being of the same essence of as the Ādi Buddha, Vajradhara, and the Buddha of Bodh Gaya..... I am the master of the Eight Fathers of Generation, of the Eight Mothers of Birth, of the Eight Places of Travel, of the Eight Places of Abode, of the Eight Cemeteries for Meditation, of the Eight Kinds of Gurus, of the Eight Classes of Wisdom, of the Eight Highest Lamas [or directors of religion], of the Eight Classes of Magical Illusion, of the Eight Sorts of Garments, of the Eight Tantric Deities Difficult to Propitiate, of the Eight Parts of Yogic Dress in Cemeteries of the Eight Past and Eight Future Events, of the Eight Classes of Past Error and of the Eight Classes of Future

Error. I have collected all perfection doctrines, and I know the past, present and future in completeness. . . ."

Padma went on a mission to eight countries. He is associated with the eight great charnel grounds. In *Chakrasamvara mandala*s, there are eight cemeteries, eight trees and eight *stūpa*s, eight bodies of water, eight Nāgas and eight gods. Eight is the number of completion in Vajrayāna *mandala* space.There are eight sacred mountains. Padma himself incarnated as an eight-year-old child. He consecrated the building of the Samye Monastery on the eighth day of the eighth month of the Earth-Male-Tiger Year

The transformation of the eight consciousnesses into the five wisdoms is the secret way. Within the Eight Solitary Places of Realization, there are the Five Power-places of the Guru. These are five caves of Guru Rinpoche. Each one is associated with a different aspect of Padmasambhava: body, speech, mind, qualities, and action. Drak Yongdzong is the cave of his Buddha-body .The cave of Samye Chimpu is the power-place of the Guru's speech. Yarlung Shetak is the power-place of his qualities. This is a crystal cave. This is an example of an "eagle's nest" hermitage. Senge Dzong is the power place of the Guru's action and is located across the Tibetan border in the Mon region of Eastern Bhutan. Padmsambhava had five consorts or "Wisdoms"; Mandarava of Zahor, considered an emanation of Vajravārāhī's Body, Yeshe Tsogyal of Tibet, emanation of Vajravārāhī's Speech, Belmo Shākya Devi of Nepal is considered an emanation of Vajravārāhī's Mind, Belwang Kalasiddhi also of Nepal, emanation of Vajravarahi's Quality, Mangalā (Monmo Tashi Khyeudren or Tashi Chidren) emanation of Vajravārāhī's Activity. There were five *dākinī*s with whom Padmasambhava practiced Tantra in five different caves at Ayui-yin Sume shrine in Mongolia.

Similarly, there are triads associated with Padmasambhava. The name Heruka, whose emanation he is believed to be, itself is derived from conjunction of three root syllables, each connoting different modes of emptiness. *He* is the the emptiness of phenomena, *ru* is the emptiness of person and *ka* is the union of bliss and emptiness. This kind of composition of mantra became a well developed science in Kashmir Shaiva philosophy in later centuries. Herukas are the embodiment of the 'male' qualities of Buddhahood -- the dynamic aspect of enlightenment.

The unfoldment of the concept of *trikāyā* of the Buddha is just like the Trika philosophy. *Trikāyā,* or the three bodies of the Buddha are represented by the three sacred mountain peaks of Tsari, Kailash and Lapchi. There is a triad of *bīja* syllables. OM is in bright white light on forehead, AH in bright red light on throat and HUNG in bright blue light on the heart.The rainbow body of Padmasambhava is supposed to be created by the emanation of different colours *Trikāyā* of light from three centres of body.

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The threefold OM, HUM, and PHAT corresponds to the three main forms of *Vajrayoginī* on three different planes of experience. It is mentioned that Padmasambhava received the 'initiation of body (*kāyā*), speech (*vāk*), and mind (*chitta*)'.

Kashmir and Padamsambhava

Octads, pentads and triads of categories are an important characteristic of the Kashmir Shaiva philosophical tradition also. The Trika philosophy is built upon this intricate weaving of mathematical models that fit into diagramatic representations of things viz. *mandala*s. Abhinavagupta's *Parā-trishikā* explores the three sets of numbers in detail. It is well known that the Trika philosophy revolves around triads and there are the seven *Mātrikā* Goddess that belong to the world of speech. Shankaracharya composed an *ashtakam* (an octad of verses in praise of Tripurasundarī). Panini's grammar used for developing mantra *shāstra* itself is based upon octads. There are 8 series of Sanskrit vowels and 8 series of consonants. Matsyendranath, to whom Abhinavagupta makes obeisance in his magnum opus the *Tantrāloka*, is famed as the founder of the Kaula school of Tantra. The Kaula *chakra* system is eightfold. There are 8 lotuses

each with eight petals and these represent the 64 *yoginī*s of the *Yogini* cult

Similarly, there are pentads. The *Panchastavī* is a pentad of hymns to Bhavānī / Mother Kundalinī. There are five functions as the Self in the *Pratyabhijnāhridayam*, namely *ābhāsana* (to make something appear), *rakti* thinking process), *vimarshana* (experience from involvement with the object of thought), *bijāvasthāpana* (proliferation), and *vilopana* (dissolution). There are five state of consciousness -- *jāgrat*, *svapna*, *sushupti*, *turīyā* and *turīyātīta*..There are several sets of pentads in the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism. The Supreme Being, *Parama Shiva*, has a pentad of powers or *shakti*s: *chit shakti*, *ānanda shakti*, *ichchā shakti*, *jñāna shakti* and *kriyā shakti* (consciousness, bliss, will, knowledge, and action). Shiva performs five eternal cosmic functions. These are *srishti* (creation), *sthiti* (preservation), *samhāra* (dissolution), *tirodhāna* (concealment) and *anugraha* (grace).

The *Shiva Sūtras,* revealed to Vasugupta, mention various triads. There are the three *upāya*s (means) to liberation suiting the proclivities of different aspirants: *Shāmbhava upāya*, *Shākta upāya*, *ānava upāya*.There is the triad of three levels of cosmic powers -- *parā*, *aparā*, *parāparā*. The Trika system itself is based on three sacred texts -- *Āgama*, *Spanda* and *Pratyabhijñā*.

The iconography of Padamsambhava holding a *khatavānga* with three severed heads denoting the three *kāyā*s of Buddha viz. the *dharmakāyā*, *sambhogakāyā*, and *nirmānakāyā*, has been extensively discussed. It is well established by scholars that Padmasambhava's body was adorned by like bone ornaments, an animal skin, marks of human ash, a skull-cup, a *damarū*, a thighbone trumpet, and a skull-topped *khatvānga* which was directly borrowed by the Buddhists from the Shaiva sect of Kāpālikas. Particularly remarkable is the transformation of *khatvānga* into *vajra*. Hagiographical accounts of Padmasambhava's life often refer to his vists to charnel grounds in Kashmir. This points to the importation of practices and philosophy prevalent in Kashmir by the Buddhists.

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An image of the twelve-armed Chakrasamvara (circa-725AD) has been found in Kashmir and is at present displayed in the Los Angles Country Museum of Arts (John C. Huntington, Dina Bangdel, The Circle of Bliss, 2003, p.252). The image represents Chakrasamvara as having blue colour, four faces, twelve hands and two legs. He holds *vajra*, bell, *damarū*, axe, trident, *khatvānga* and a severed head of Brahma in his hands, and wears a necklace of fifty human heads and tiger skin. The severed head of Brahma in the sixth hand seems to be a direct borrowing from the iconography of Shiva as the deity of the Kāpālika sect. Since, this image dates back to a time of Padmasambhava, it can be safely assumed that Padmasambhava adopted many things from the pre-existing traditions and belief systems and appropriated to expand the influence of Buddhism. Similar strategy is evident in his adoption of Bon religious sites, practises and beliefs, to make the Himalayas Budddhistic. Samvara is conceived as Demchog, the Circle of Bliss that is beyond *samsāra* and *nirvāna*.This is something similar to Kula rites. The mantra of Samvara is as follow:

"*Om Shri Vajra he he ru ru kam hum hum phat dākinī dzala Shambharam svāhā*!"

There is no doubt that Padmasambhava and his Nyingma sect and various schools of Kashmir Shaivism shared a common cultural matrix. This is why the Sixteenth Karmapa used to say that the *Chakrasamvara Tantra* is the northern lineage while Kashmir Shaivism is the southern lineage of the same belief and practices.

Trikuta, 'womb cave' and Padmasambhava's terma

The landscape of the Himalayas has been used by many traditions to establish their dominance over the Indian sub-continent. We have seen how the Himalayas have been made to fit into the *mandala* concept. The eight sacred mountains of the Samvara tradition are associated with the eight-fold *mandala*s. Three peaks are considered the most sacred -- Kailash (Kang Rinpoche) in the West Tibet, Tsari in Central Tibet and Lapchi in Eastern Tibet represent Vajrakāyā's body, speech and mind respectively. But, we have seen how the power

points have been always included under the pentad category. Could the triad of the holy peaks constitute a part of a pentad to be further included under an octad of sacred mountains? There is a possibility of configuring a pentad of holy mountains in the Himalayan topography that can add up to make an octad. The location of the three sacred peaks of the Meili snow mountain in the easternmost corner of Tibet in the area now known as Shangri-la seems to lead to such a pressumption. Interestingly, in another range of the Himalayas, exists yet another set of three holy peaks, known as Trikuta, which is located in the Katra area of Jammu & Kashmir. The flanking of three holy peaks of Kailash, Tsari and Lapchi by triad of the holy peaks create a pentad that reiterate the pentad characteristics of the power-spaces found in abundance in Padamsambhava's hagiographies. The five *dākinī* caves, five Shakti consorts, five holy caves have a correspondence in the five holy mountains.This creates a kind of *mandala* structure and puts Tsari, the copper-coloured mountain and the abode of Padmasambhava, in the middle of the *mandala.*

The Trikuta Mountain is one of the most important power places in the sub-continent. The pilgrim has to pass through a womb cave at Adakunwari about which the local belief is similar to the Buddhist beliefs about other womb caves in Asia. From the main cave at the Bhawan, a stream of water burst forth. Similar caves associated with Padmasambhava with water streams are found as far as Sikkim and Mongolia. The Trikuta caves contain three sacred stones that enhance the sanctity of this place. Seen in the pan-Asian perspective, it is clear that the Trikuta hills contain most of the characteristics of various kinds of sacred landscape found in Asia. Surprisingly, Padmasambhava, being active in Kashmir, Mandi and Ladakh did not notice the prominent Trikuta peaks with this unique combination of the womb-caves, three holy stones and water streams. Or did history witness obliteration of imagination about certain landscape essential in the construction of external *mandala* after the rise of antagonistic sects? Did the Trikuta hills ever constitute part of a pentad completing the pan-Himalayan *mandala* of Tibetan Buddhism? My guess is in the affirmative. Is this the mind-*terma* waiting to be revealed to a non-Buddhist explorer?

Om ah hung vajra guru padma siddhi hung!!!

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Remains of Shiva Bhuteshvara group of temples at Naran Nag with a distant view of Jyethesha temple in the background.

Another view of Shiva Bhuteshvara group of temples with a characteristic trefoil arch

Pilgrimage

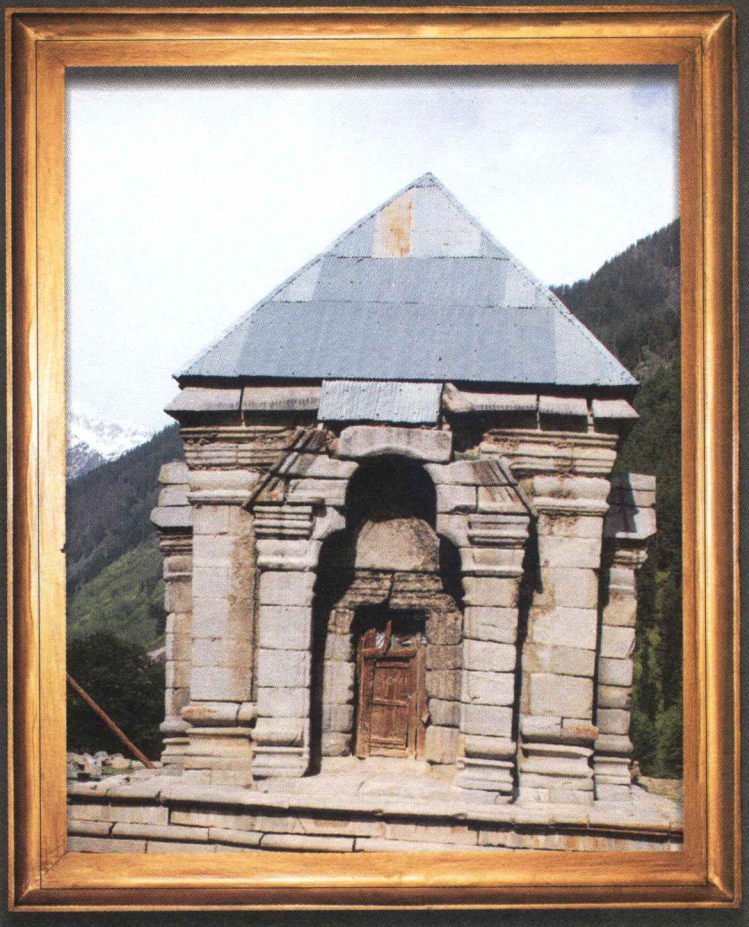
A pilgrimage to temple complex at Naran Nag and the Sacred Harmukh peaks and Gangabal Lake.

Shiva linga in the temple courtyard

Ruins of other temples at Naran Nag

A scenic view of Kanakavahini river which flows near by

Naran Nag temples with the backdrop of the Harmukh peaks



A closer view of Shiva Jyeshthesha temple

A view of various platforms for Shiva Bhuteshvara in a linga form

A panoramic view of the Harmukh peaks overlooking the temples

The shimmering Gangabal lake

The perenial glacier at Gangabal

The Gangabal lake and the glacier that feeds it

Book Review

Maybe, finding answers is not what I seek

Rashneeek Kher

That it took twenty-one years for a Kashmiri Pandit writer to come out with a novel in English giving a first account of the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir is but a sad reflection on the creative capabilities of a community that prides itself on being the only one in the world to have hundred percent literacy rate. Among the many other things that the community has slowly been losing, the most depressing loss is that of is its intellectual enterprise, or so I think.

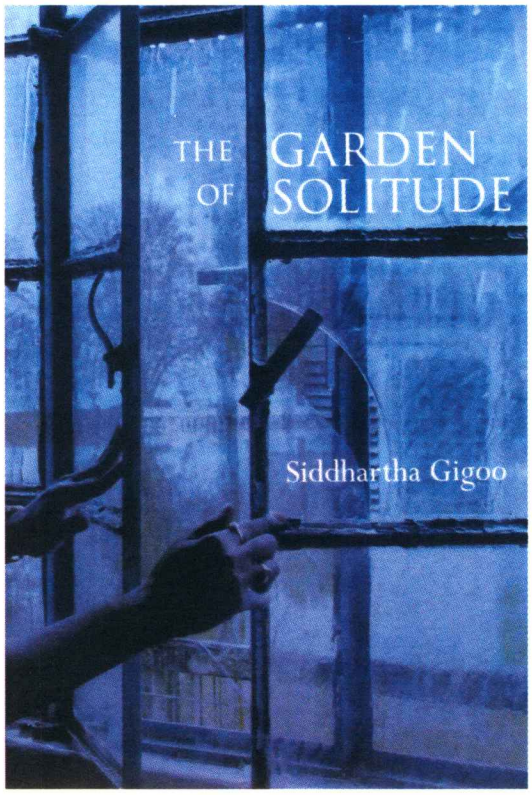
Siddhartha Gigoo's debut novel, 'The Garden of Solitude' belongs to a chip off the old block genre of literature. It may disappoint the reader looking in it for something like the magical realism of a Rushdie or the intricacies that one finds in Tarun Tejpal's writings. Siddartha's style may appear to be simple; as simple as we find in children's textbooks. Simple it may be, but loaded with meaning. The jargon has intentionally been kept out, as has been the bitterness that comes from being in exile. Indeed, it is lucidity that makes the novel stand out in the swamp of present day writings by Indian authors in English.

Sridar, as the novelist calls his main character, is rather an uncommon name for a Kashmiri Pandit boy born in the nineteen seventies; but name apart, Siddartha's protagonist could be anyone of us born in the Kashmir of those times when today's Kashmir could simply have been dismissed as a bad dream. The Garden of Solitude is a docu-novel that recounts the beautiful times when there was peace in Kashmir. It also records the violence that rocked the Valley with the onset of the armed insurgency. The frenzy of the Aazadi movement, the cataclysmic events that led to the forced exodus of the Pandits and its aftermath, everything is recorded in a poignant manner. Sridar is not just an eyewitness to the sordid happenings of the times like Sanjay of the Bhagvad Gita, but himself a victim drawn into the vortex of the sordid happenings, a sufferer in every sense of the word. As the novel progresses, the author gets a firmer grip on the storyline and the development of the characters. His earlier descriptions look a bit sketchy, with him appearing a little lost in a maze of memories. But soon the accounts become more lucid and the orientation more clear. The novel recounts the days of Sridar's growing up in the neighbourhood of downtown Srinagar. The author dwells at some length upon the complex relationship between the Pandits and Muslims of the area, showing how fragile it actually was despite their living together in the same land for centuries. Suspicion creeps in and shatters it, once the call for Azaadi is given by the latter. It reverberates across the whole Valley and causes consternation among the Pandits.

Until now, the novel has an even pace. It is here that the lid on the reality of the circumstances that had kept things together in Kashmir gets blown off, setting the novel free from its cozy confines. Now on the narrative becomes more candid and real, exposing the tensions

waiting to explode beneath the surface of the plot. Suddenly an ugly Kashmir (sic) reveals its face. The contained entropy takes a hideous shape. The novel travels out of the Kashmir Valley and crosses the Jawahar Tunnel, only to return later.

It now moves on to record and document the catastrophic exodus of an entire community from what had been its home ever since one knew of history. We find the novel taking us to the squalid and subhuman conditions prevailing in the refugee camps in which thousands and thousands of Pandits uprooted from their native soil are forced to live. The author talks of the appalling indifference of the authorities towards the fate of a people who have been subjected to atrocities and ethnic cleansing, the mood of hopelessness and existential despair that grips the dispossessed Pandits living inside the camps, the identity crisis they are face to face with, but does not give any opinion. He does not wallow in self-pity nor does he allow himself to be led by the prejudices of a victim of terror. The story is told as it is seen. The author's protagonist merely states what he has lives through.



Sridar is fortunate not to have lived in a refugee camp for long; but the agony and anguish of those trapped in cramped and dirty spaces without any hope of breathing free air finds expression in the character of Pamposh, portrayed brilliantly. He is a reticent boy living in one of the many refugee camps set up in Jammu, who has no more than a cameo role in the novel, but one that leaves an indelible mark on our minds. Through Pamposh the author has given expression to the excruciating pain of being exiled and uprooted. But more than anything else he shows to what extents of putrefaction of the mind can living in such degrading conditions lead one to when he describes how his grandfather wants to smell the putrid smell of his own grand-daughter's clothes.

Sridar has shades of Kafka in his character. The thought of purposelessness of existence so torments his mind that he wanders from place to place to seek meaning. To me the most beautiful part of the novel is that in which the author describes Sridar's travel to Leh, the enchanting Shangri-La. It is here that the novel discovers the meaning that it "does not seek to find". Sridar meets the mysterious, but truly mesmerizing Ameira -- a woman without a past, as she is described to him. Then the shell crumbles, just a little, and we discover a half-Kashmiri girl who had come searching for her past but eventually settles for slipping into anonymity. The moment of silence between the two of them with Sridar's trembling hands holding hers could easily have been the culmination of the novel.

Dreams and their meanings have a special significance in the novel and it is one such dream that brings Sridar back to the refugee camps that he had left behind. He searches for his friends and their stories, but finds none. Time seems to have devoured them all. The world seems to have forgotten the Pandits. But Sridar finds a purpose in life -- the Book of Ancestors!

The novel takes us back to Kashmir. Sridar returns to his home but finds it occupied by a Muslim family. The daughter of the new occupants asks her mother who could this man be who speaks Kashmiri like them yet isn't a Kashmiri. It is an unusual homecoming, smelling of hope even as it unravels new layers of the complexity characterizing the relations between the two Kashmiri communities. He is welcomed everywhere and people seem cordial, but that doesn't take away from the fact that he is seen as someone who has come from Delhi -- a guest.

The novel ends on a note of optimism, or pessimism depending upon how one looks at it. 'The Book of Ancestors' is published, but released on a hot sultry day, not in Kashmir but in Jammu where the exiles live. It begins to rain soon after the book launch is over. The author leaves the book open-ended. Like everyone else, he too isn't sure if the Pandits will ever return to their "Garden of Solitude".

[The Garden of Solitude, Sidhartha Gigoo, Rupa Publications, New Delhi 2011, price Rs.195]

Novel

Garden of Solitude

Siddhartha Gigoo

(Excerpted from the author's recently published debut novel)

Mahanandju woke up early on the first day in their new rented home. He wanted to shave, but could not locate his shaving kit. There was no mirror.

'Why shave? I shall perish soon', he lisped mournfully.

He searched for his mirror in the trunk. It was not there.

'The mirror is not here. We must have left it in our house'.

'You don't need it anymore', his wife said, seeing him rummage through the utensils.

'I am a man without a reflection', he laughed mockingly.

Each day brought new problems and difficulties. The calendar on the wall lost its meaning. No one looked at it. The dates seemed meaningless. It was difficult for Mahanandju to tell the past from the present. He longed to live life backwards.

With each passing day and night, he grew fond of his loneliness. He reflected on the past and remembered the days

in Kashmir; the weeping willows and the dancing saffron buds, the lush green rice fields and the singing hoopoes. He dreamt of his old home in Kashmir.

Every morning Lasa and Sridar walked to the newspaper vendor to buy newspapers and read about the situation in the Valley. There was news about protests, killings, crossfire, raids, crackdowns and processions on the streets. There was news about new militant organisations being formed. There was news about Pandits running away from their homes in the villages and towns and migrating to Jammu.

The camp set up at the cricket stadium became a place for the migrants to struggle for survival. The place drowned in a thousand voices. The government set up schools for migrant children. Work was afoot to set up camp colleges as well.

Giridari Lai and his wife, father and mother had shifted into a tent in the camp. He had sent his young daughter to Delhi to be with his wife's brother, who was settled there. For days, Giridari Lai's wife and his ailing mother could not go to the toilet in the camp. It was a row of makeshift toilets. The walls were made of wooden planks. Thick sheets of tin with holes and other scrap from the junkyard formed the roof. There were no bathrooms. They all went either to the school orthe temple to bathe. Slowly, inconvenience became a habit. They got used to the new way of life. Giridari Lai and his old father spent most of the days outside the tent. It was all cramped inside. His ailing mother was bedridden.

Sridar frequented the migrant camp regularly. Lasa made new acquaintances. Idle conversations resulted in friendship. In the new locality, Mahanandju met Chaju Ram, an old man, who once owned many shops which now belonged to his sons. Chaju Ram and Mahanandju spent days together listening. to each other's tales. Chaju Ram's daughter-in-law had great respect for Mahanandju.

The results of Sridar's examination were announced. He passed with average marks. Lasa drew up various options for Sridar's further schooling. He was worried on account of Sridar's education and admission in a good school.

'I am accumulating the ammunition,' Sridar said to his father. 'Someday, I will write a story about all this.'

Lasa inspected all the papers he had brought along from his old house. Court papers of his house, educational certificates, appointment letter of Lasa's job at the school in Kashmir, manuscripts, his grandfather's letters and a trunk full of books.

'We must go to Delhi to get you admitted to a school,' Lasa said to Sridar. 'Seeking admission in a good school will not be an easy task. But we must try and not waste any time.'

Lasa and Sridar decided to depart for Delhi within a week. There were preparations to be made. Sridar accepted his father's decision unwillingly. To him education did not mean anything at all. He hated the idea of going to a school or a college and listening to teachers' lectures.

In the evenings Sridar read the books which he had excavated from the trunks. He found solace in the stories; the victories and the defeats of the characters. He made up his mind to revive his writing. He wanted to write poetry. Evenings at his new home descended peacefully. He would gaze at the pale sky for hours till stars appeared, one by one, in the sky. Somewhere else - afar - the snow melted on the mountain tops. Summer hid somewhere near a corner. Behind the mountains, his old house existed in despair. Every afternoon he loitered in the migrant camp and spent the evenings at the terrace, memorising new words he had learnt. He imagined scenes about love. He did not have any friends and the thought of carrying his loneliness with him in his heart, all through his life, tormented him. His secret desires and yearnings lay buried in his heart. His fears and dreams were imprisoned in his being.

The sullenness in his heart gave rise to a passionate desire to experience new things, dream new dreams and explore a new world. The will to live surfaced and he took to exploring the world around him. He listened to his heart. Dreams returned to him in his sleep. They took hold of him while he was awake.

At the camp he saw maddening crowds of people jostling for water. Men and women waited for hours for ration cards. Young girls and boys fetched water in the buckets from afar.

He saw family members huddled in tents in rain. He looked at the tents lined up in an array. On the canvas of one tent, he read the initials of an occupant: D.N.G., Tent Number: 63. When he entered the tent, he trembled at the darkness inside. He saw grim faces staring at one another; a family of ten sat still in a canvas dwelling. Three generations with grandfather and grandmother, father and mother, daughter, son and daughter-in-law and two children, all clung to one another. A small opening overlooked another canvas tent. Sridar marvelled at their ingenuity of creating a small corner for their kitchen, where they placed some thalis, vessels, plastic boxes containing spices, a stove and a can full of kerosene. He vowed never to enter that tent ever again.

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Over the next few days, many more ready-to-move-in canvas tents were erected in the outskirts of the city to accommodate the migrants who arrived.

A week later Lasa and Sridar set out for Delhi in a bus.

The idea of Delhi weighed heavy on Sridar's heart. He was not prepared for a big city. He had heard of it as a cruel city, where there were no evenings and where there weren't any lazy afternoons.

The first day in Delhi was just about phone calls to different people Lasa knew. Friends of friends and acquaintances of acquaintances! There were a myriad names listed in Lasa's pocket diary. There were numbers and addresses. In the evenings, Lasa and Sridar sauntered the streets at Connaught Place and spent some time in the coffee house. The coffee house was

frequented by Kashmiri Pandits.

The Pandits discussed the politics of Kashmir. They sipped coffee and talked about migration, life in Kashmir and life in exile.

'We are not migrants. We left Kashmir long back, and ever since live in our own houses in Delhi,' argued a gentleman wearing a coat and a necktie, sipping coffee. 'But, we are with the new migrants in this moment of pain. We know how it feels to be homeless. We understand this alienation,' he added.

'Good that we left Kashmir long back,' another man blurted indignantly. 'What did we have there that belonged to us anyway? There was no beauty at all. It was a wretched darkness. Pandits were living on borrowed time. This had to happen one day. There was no trust between the Pandits and the Muslims; only pretence. Exile has always been our destiny. I lost my old house ages ago, but I gained my freedom outside Kashmir.'

'Good that we left Kashmir long back,' another man blurted indignantly. 'What did we have there that belonged to us anyway? There was no beauty at all. It was a wretched darkness. Pandits were living on borrowed time. This had to happen one day. There was no trust between the Pandits and the Muslims; only pretence. Exile has always been our destiny. I lost my old house ages ago, but I gained my freedom outside Kashmir.'

Lasa sat silent and struggled to tell one migrant from another. Who was a migrant and who was not? There were those who had left recently, and others who had left their homes in the late 1940s.

The days in Delhi were chaotic and bereft of any hope. Sridar's admission in a private school was not so easy after all. In many schools, the admissions stood closed, and in others Sridar's marks did not qualify him for admission. They roamed from one school to the other in the merciless heat of Delhi. One of Lasa's friends suggested a boarding school at Simla. One newspaper bore a story of the government considering reservation for the migrant students in various schools and colleges across the country. Lasa did not lose hope.

Simla reminded Sridar of Kashmir. Lasa and Sridar relished the chill in the air when they arrived at Simla. They stayed at a lodge. The early morning tea and coffee served at the lodge were refreshing. The smell of fresh green vegetables and spices filled the bazaar. Sridar's thoughts meandered aimlessly. He did not know which place to call his home. Kashmir, Jammu or Delhi! He wondered if there were other places he would visit. Lasa worried on account of his son's admission. He wanted Sridar to join an institution. The boarding schools at Simla were expensive. The warden of the hostel, who was also a lecturer in the school, was sympathetic towards Lasa and Sridar. He invited them to the staffroom for some coffee and regretted his inability to help them with the admission. He suggested other schools elsewhere.

'No school will be willing to admit a homeless migrant; one without an address,' Sridar thought.

Sridar resigned to the turn of events-and decided to stay with his family. He did not wish to go through any more distress, given his restless temperament. He grew restive as he reconciled to his new beginning at his one-room tenement. He pleaded with his father and convinced him of the merits of returning to Jammu and joining the camp school for migrants set up near the cricket stadium, which also housed the migrant colony. It was to remain one for years to come.

Lasa agreed to Sridar's wish to return to Jammu and stay with the family. They spent some days in Simla and returned to Jammu.

Years later, Sridar was to reminisce his first day at the camp school with much fondness.

Gopi Nath was at the peak of his career when he had to migrate. He had expected to be promoted as the headmaster of the school where he taught in Kashmir. But when he joined the camp school, he gave up all hope of becoming the headmaster. In the school he roamed aimlessly trying to bury the memory of his dream. Despite the condition he found himself in, he awaited an order without any hope of seeing his name. Days later, he received the order and a letter of promotion from the Department of Education, stating that he was promoted to be the headmaster of the camp school. He read his name over and over again and thought it was a dream. Everyone in the camp school congratulated him. He sat in a tent, a makeshift staffroom, and gave a lecture to all the migrant teachers. He became restless

and spent hours strolling in the camp. He watched the students come out of their tents in the morning to enter other tents, which were classrooms. There was no bell in the school. No one dusted the benches. In many tents, students sat on rugs and listened inattentively to the lectures delivered by sleepy teachers. During the recess, everyone went back to their tents to have their meal. Some students preferred to keep away from the afternoon sessions and enjoy a siesta on the cots outside the tents. And many others went to buy lottery tickets with the money their parents gave them. The teachers played cards and carrom and discussed the affairs of the school.

Gopi Nath's wife cooked rice and cheese for him on the day he received the order announcing his appointment as headmaster of the camp school. She sent some portion to her neighbours to celebrate her husband's promotion and share the joy with them. That day Gopi Nath couldn't sit still. 'Why are you so agitated?' his wife asked him, seeing him leaf irritably through a bunch of papers in his hand. 'Aren't you happy that you are the school headmaster now? You should not act stressful.'

He scolded her.

I have important responsibilities to discharge. The school is in a mess. Can't you see? I have to set things right. The students should not feel neglected. Do you know what it is to run a camp school?'

In the night, he slept in snatches. He woke up and couldn't sleep at all.

'Aren't you getting good sleep? Is something bothering you?' his wife asked.

Gopi Nath stared at the bulb that clung to a wire hooked on the pole of the canvas tent.

'It is the happiest day of my life', he said and cried. I want this day to last forever.'

Every day Gopi Nath woke up early and bathed at a spring nearby. He wore a coat and put on a necktie like he used to do in Kashmir. He took all the Chemistry lessons himself and spent the afternoons inspecting the other classes. When he saw his colleagues wasting time in idle gossip, he asked them to take more interest in their classes. He reprimanded one teacher when he couldn't speak in his class.

'Why teach? The students are not interested in the classes. I have forgotten everything. There is chaos everywhere', lamented the teacher who taught Mathematics.

'This attitude will not do. The attendance in your class is falling down', Gopi Nath reprimanded.

For many days, Gopi Nath tried to set things right in the school. In the evenings, he gave lessons to the students.

Sridar's first day at the camp school was eventful. He wore a blue coat. The sky was clear. The district administration had allocated a dozen tents to the school administration. One tent was used as a makeshift office and others were used as classrooms. Migrant boys and girls, who lived in the tents, simply walked from their tents into the other tents to attend their classes. The teachers were migrants who had taught in various government schools in Kashmir. Sridar hated sciences and waited the whole day for the English class. There was poetry to be read and some essays and short stories too.

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Lasa spent his days in varied conversations with his new friends and neighbours. Conversations helped allay the torment of an alien surrounding. There was not much to do on most days. Doing nothing was laborious sometimes. He hated the nights. He could not read. The books were still in the trunk, which was used as a settee for guests to sit on. There was paucity of furniture in the room. He lost interest in his hobbies. Reading seemed cumbersome and useless.

'What good are these books?' Lasa wondered. He wanted to burn them. Gowri could not get used to the new kitchen. Her only occupation became assisting her daughter-in-law with cooking. Once a while, she cooked fish, dried turnip and rice for Mahanandju. Lasa bought a new mirror for his father. The migrant priests brought out a new almanac for the families to plan the festivities

in the months and also to keep track of the auspicious days.

Lasa fished some old books from his trunk to adorn the lone shelf in the room; hardbound editions of poetry, anthologies and story books.

'Won't these look good on the shelf?' he wondered.

He thought these books would give a semblance of culture to the new rented house in which they lived. The books did not remain untouched for long. They were dusted every day. Sridar used the hardbound books to hide some bits of paper on which he had scribbled notes for his essays and writings. Soon, he started reading the books his father had carried in the trunks. At school he was an average student. Mathematics was his greatest fear. Numbers made no sense. He failed miserably even at cramming the solutions to the problems. Somehow, he wanted to pass the examination with marks which would get him into a college. Examinations had no meaning for him.

Sridar met Pamposh in one of the classes at the camp school. Pamposh wore a torn and rugged pheran even when summer had started. Pamposh's rugged appearance and unkempt look intrigued Sridar, who was always well-dressed. Sridar had finished composing a poem on living in the new land.

Pamposh reminded Sridar of someone he had long forgotten. He lived in one of the tents nearby. He talked to no one and no one talked to him. The teachers took no interest in him, but advised him to pay attention to the class lectures. After the class lectures, Pamposh would run back to his tent and disappear in the darkness. To some teachers he seemed wayward.

Sridar decided to talk to Pamposh during a vacant period. Initial attempts at conversation failed. Sridar saw Pamposh hide behind the water tanks in the camp and smoke cigarettes. He saw him collect half-smoked cigarettes and discarded cigarette butts from the roadside and treasure them in his pheran pocket.

He had perfected the art of smoking two cigarette butts at the same time. One day Sridar asked Pamposh to accompany him to a tea shop near the highway and offered to buy him a cigarette. Pamposh agreed to join him.

'What are your plans after completing higher secondary school?' Sridar asked Pamposh while having tea.

'I am not sure. Have not thought about it yet! Let the time come,' he said. 'Are you also thinking of going to Delhi or some other big city to pursue engineering?'

'I find engineering boring. Maybe, I will not make a good engineer. Sometimes, I feel that I am a wanderer. If life was a dream, I would happily join the gypsies.'

Pamposh smiled and offered Sridar a cigarette. 'I have never had one, although I am tempted to try one today,' Sridar said. 'Where did you live in Kashmir, Pamposh?'

Pamposh fell silent for a moment. Sridar looked into his eyes. Pamposh fixed his gaze at Sridar as though he had lost himself in the labyrinth of time.

Sridar wondered if he had asked the right question.

'How does it matter now?' Pamposh said. 'It surely does not matter! Where we came from? How we left our houses behind? What we lost?'

On most days, both of them spent a lot of time together after school. Pamposh would smoke and Sridar would drink cups of tea at the tea shop. Sridar told Pamposh about his hobbies and about how he enjoyed writing poetry.

'I would be happy to listen to your poem. Please, recite some lines for me. I hope it is not a long one. Is it about love?' Pamposh implored.

'It is about autumn in Kashmir.'

Sridar recited the poem. He read slowly as though it was necessary to touch each word, each syllable, each line, and feel the warmth.

'. . . the winds bury the dreams

of autumn,

elsewhere one more day

is put to death.

The chinar shrieks into a fading silence,

the embankment is stained crimson.

The village is all astir.

Some forsaken reminiscences

still watch the grim scene

from a lone corner

of my lost childhood . . .'

Pamposh listened with all his heart and soul. The look on his face was one that evoked pity and fear. He recited the lines that Sridar read to him. He recited them many times, over and over again, to feel the presence of

autumn.

Moments later Pamposh cried. Sridar heaved a sigh. He felt sad that his poem had brought tears in Pamposh's eyes.

T wish I too could write poetry,' Pamposh said listlessly. T can feel like a poet. I do not know the words. I cannot find the voice. But I can see the pain. I can feel the pain. I can paint the silence. I have seen my soul hung on a clothesline and perish in the hard sun. The mad laughter of the lunatic cannot be ignored.'

He fell silent again and toyed with a cigarette butt in his fingers.

'Life teaches us that there is beauty in ugliness,' Sridar said.

Then Pamposh said something that Sridar was not prepared for.

'Every day I lead the life of a centipede. I crawl. I lick. I hide. I sting. I wake up to the fumes of kerosene in the morning and the sting of speeding ants, feeding ravenously on the sugar spilled on the floor of the tent. It feels as if I have never had a morsel of rice for ages. I wake up hungry and go to bed hungry. I lead the life of a centipede, I crawl. All around the camp, there is stench of human excrement and waste. People wake up in the morning, hungry and muddled. The awakenings are pallid. The water in the water tanker smells foul, and children lie whole day in their own vomit. The quivering smile on my mother's face is false. I want to peel off that false smile from her face, so that she is beautiful once again. Father spends most of the time playing cards with the other migrants near the highway tea shop. I am a mute spectator to the horrors of the life inside my tent. The air inside is squalid. My grandfather barely speaks. He lost his voice while leaving the village. A young man had shown him a gun as he was returning from a butcher's shop. He still thinks that the young man is hiding around a corner, with a gun, waiting to scare him. He stopped talking after we crossed the Banihal tunnel. I saw him look sadly at the fading mountains for long, till they disappeared completely, one by one, into his frozen dreams. And he swallowed his fright. Today I cannot hear what he says. His words do not come out of his mouth. When we are asleep, we cannot even stretch our arms and legs. There are no hangers to hang our clothes on. No cupboards to keep our personal belongings in. We have no portraits of our gods and goddesses. No pictures of our ancestors. During the day, we hide from the blazing sun. At night we live from one insect bite to another. Centipedes, millipedes and spiders are our companions. We must learn how to live with them.

'My grandmother does not recognise the insects. She confuses a lizard for a plastic toy paralysed on the wall. Her gaze is fixed at the crucified lizard. For hours and hours, she just gazes endlessly into a dark nothingness! It is a vacant gaze into a world of oblivion and amnesia. Petrified with a sense of desolation, she does not even feel the presence of hundreds of mosquitoes circling her head constantly while she stares into blank space. I do not know if she is hungry or thirsty. When asleep, she resembles a corpse. She perspires. I wake up to feel her pulse and feel happy that she is still breathing. She would be happy in her death, I pray. My mother and sister wash their clothes and the utensils in a puddle of water outside our tent. They line up for hours in the morning to use the makeshift toilet made of torn shreds of canvas, pieces of cardboard and tin. They await their turn at the filthy and stinking toilets while the loitering men watch the women wait to relieve themselves. Many women prefer to go to the stinking latrines at midnight, away from the stare of men. Even the mosquitoes keep away from the foul smelling latrines. Sometimes, I hear women shriek, fall silent and then cry in solace behind the filthy tank. The nights bring squalor, pallor and heat. We live in fear of the mangled and naked electric wires, criss-crossed around wooden poles that hold the canvas of the tent together.

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'There is a large rash on my grandfather's leg, a rash perhaps from the bite of a millipede. The rash has swollen and become sore now. It oozes puss and resembles a horrifying wound. He scratches the wound with a knife. The festering wound will never heal. I want

to burn the wound. The old man looks at my sister change clothes at bedtime. She puts out the light. There are no curtains to hide behind. She sleeps in snatches, sandwiched like an insect between her mother and her grandmother. She dreams nervy dreams of crawling insects in the sun and the shade. The old man wants to touch her clothes hanging from the hook. He smells the clothes of his own granddaughter. And he relishes their putrid smell. We lick the hours that weigh heavy on our half-asleep existence, and tread laboriously into an endless strain of nightmares. The earthen pot in the tent is empty. A discarded plastic bottle used for the toilet contains a few drops of water. I grab it and empty the drops into my parched mouth. My tongue is dry. It can fall off anytime. My grandmother shrieks when she sees the sun. She dreads stepping out of the tent for fear of fainting in the sun. She soils her clothes every day. She can't even use the bedpan which my mother got for her. From morning to evening she clings to the old box, which she brought along. It sticks inseparably to her chest. I wonder if there are any ornaments or valuables left in it.

'Never before have I felt the desire to unknow myself and others. The smell . . . the touch . . . the breath . . . the sigh!

'In an adjacent tent a family of five torture an old man, their foster-grandfather, who lost his mental balance upon seeing his house fade away in a hazy distance. The old man is a burden for his son and daughter-in-law. Another mouth to feed, they feel! He moans at night constantly, and intermittently wakes up to a cold shiver - a nightmare. His son and daughter-in-law taunt him for their amusement. They whisper in his ears that his mother was dead and that she was beaten mercilessly to death. The old man groans and pleads them not to utter the atrocities. Every evening, the torment continues. The maddening laughter of the men ricochets from the tattered canvas tent. Every night the old man cries. He gapes at his son and daughter-in-law and gives them his blessings.

'Darkness! Darkness!

'I wonder what is moral and what is immoral.'

Sridar stopped breathing for a while as Pamposh described his experience and condition. He picked up Pamposh's pack of cheap cigarettes. For the first time, he lit a cigarette and took a puff. The smoke danced its way into the air and disappeared in the whirl of the ceiling fan.

That day Sridar wrote his thoughts in his journal. He wrote about Pamposh and the horrid mine of his consciousness.

'What would it be like to be Pamposh?' Sridar mused. He remembered the last words Pamposh had told him the previous day. I long for a child's laughter,' Pamposh had whispered in Sridar's ear.

Pamposh never spoke of his days in Kashmir. Sridar tried to strike such conversations with him to get to know about Pamposh's childhood days in his village in Kashmir. Pamposh's family came from a village in Kashmir. Some students in the camp told Sridar that Pamposh's family owned an orchard in Kashmir and grew pomegranates, cherries and walnuts. Pamposh's childhood may have been full of pranks, Sridar thought. Someone mentioned that Pamposh's family was the only Pandit family in their village, and that they had to run away from their home in the most horrifying of circumstances. No one was able to narrate what had happened. Pamposh had lost one home and he was not in search of another.

The migrants sat all day long on a rocky mound and discussed the affairs of their community. Days were spent sitting and talking about whatever came to their minds; their plight and their sordid condition. Waiting kept them busy. For many it was a lacerating wait. They had not yet realised that this waiting was not to end. They did not know what they were waiting for. This waiting was not for returning to their homes, not for peace in the Valley, but for a new day to dawn and the new evening to descend. They prayed for a day without a sunstroke and a night without a snakebite.

Pamposh met Sridar every day after school near an anthill. He wished to demolish the anthill with a spade and to render the snakes homeless, so that no snakebites would take place in the camp.

There was only one question to be asked during the funeral processions that left the camp every day.

'Snakebite or sunstroke?'

In the coming days Sridar and Pamposh saw many camp dwellers line up, one by one, in the crematorium. Between them breathed words bereft of any meaning! Words! Silence!

Sridar looked from the terrace of his one-room tenement and secretly admired the sunset. When he had nothing to do, he tried to reach for the leaves of a banana tree in the courtyard. He watched the neighbourhood girls play in the courtyard. Their laughter and the words they spoke in an alien language

were beautiful. He longed for their lovely glances.

In the monsoons, nettles grew fast around the hillocks surrounding the camp. Incessant rains made matters worse for the camp dwellers.

For months together marriages in the Pandit migrant community did not happen at all. No birth took place in any of the families living in the camps. There were only deaths.

In the neighbourhood where Lasa lived, a Pandit spent his days telling the beads in his rosary. He was given to a life of quietude. His son Prem Nath worked in a bank in a small town in Kashmir. After migrating to Jammu, they shifted to a room that had been used by the landlord to house a buffalo. The son lived with his mother, father, and wife and a daughter. Every morning they would all go to different places to defecate. On his way to the grocer's shop, Prem Nath knocked at the door of Lasa's room.

'Let lightning strike the Prime Minister. Look at our condition. The government is mute and deaf', Prem Nath shouted, hurling invectives.

'Come and have tea Prem Nath', Lasa said.

'Thank you Lasa! Am in a hurry! Have to fetch some lavasas for Panditji and Rani.'

Every day he spent an hour in Lasa's room sharing anecdotes of different migrant families and talked about the apathy of the government towards the displaced community.

A monetary relief of 500 rupees and a few kilos of rice and sugar for a migrant family!' Prem Nath blurted in anger. 'How can this money and rice be enough for the families who feasted on meat and fish thrice a week in their homes in Kashmir? We are exploited in our own country. The people who we trusted drove us away from our own land, and this land will drive us mad. We are victims of discrimination. Our country does not care for us and our children. May the government officials burn in hell!'

'You are right Prem Nath. It is our fate to live like this,' Lasa said to dismiss Prem Nath's tirade and prevent him from spilling more venom. He wanted to tell the guest that incessant complaining was of no good to anyone.

'How many ration cards do you have Lasa?'

'None Prem Nath. What is the need? The government pays me migrant salary here. I am content with what I have.'

'Have you lost your senses Lasa?' Prem Nath said. 'Get yourself and your family members registered as "Unemployed". You need to get a ration card. After all, how can you refuse the cash relief of 500 rupees and rice and sugar every month?'

I never gave it a thought Prem Nath. Now that you insist, let me think about this.'

Lasa offered him a cigarette. His wife brought tea and biscuits.

'Lasa, 1 have arranged for almost a dozen ration cards for my family. It is not that difficult at all. Some forged paperwork did the trick. It is chaotic at the Relief Office. I get six thousand rupees a month now.'

'But how can you have so many ration cards Prem Nath? What if you are caught by the authorities?'

'Lasa, what will happen to everyone will happen to me too. There are persons who have obtained many ration cards. We are a community of cultured persons. For years we led a pious life, a life of hard work, and of virtuous subjugation. We were silent when our women were abused and mocked at. Muslims teased us and called us names. We allowed ourselves be lampooned and laughed at. We lived by our *sanskars,* our values. But now we should struggle and live. How long can we live like this, housed in buffalo sheds? We have daughters to marry. My landlord stopped the water supply to our kitchen. He says we must evacuate soon or pay him two hundred rupees more. My mother can't even weep in the room.'

'These Dogras will take some time to understand us Prem Nath.'

'Lasa, my landlord comes home drunk every night and starts abusing. My daughter hides under the quilt in the room. She is scared. Sometimes, I don't feel safe here.'

Prem Nath fell silent for a while. Then suddenly he said something which he never wanted to say or accept.

'The Muslims were better. At least, they understood us,' he sighed.

Prem Nath's father greeted Lasa with a mysterious smile every time they met at Prem Nath's house. Prem Nath invited Lasa and Sridar to watch movies on the colour television he had bought with the relief money. Three years later, he bought a small plot of land in Jammu, and erected foundation for a two-room house. One hot summer afternoon, Prem Nath's father died of sunstroke. He fell on a pavement while sauntering idly on a road. Death was instant.

Roots

Yi chhu pūrú Kåshīr hyū...

Radhika Kaul

It is cold in here. It's chilly enough in April; January is pretty much a lost case. The rain joins in randomly from time to time... October was bright and red. Today is white, with amassed snow. But the rain overshadows it all; it is slushy and gloomy.

"*Yi chhu pūrú Kashīr hyū*", Mumma had said, back when she was visiting.....

It is cold in here. You need a strong wind-and-rain-proof jacket outside.

But, indoors, the *pheran* will do.

The one I'm wearing is my first actual big *pheran*. At least the first one bought in my name. It has pastel-coloured *kadhai* on a camel base. I didn't like the look of it at first, aside from the small matter that it reached right till my ankles. My grandmother, expert tailor that she is, immediately took out a one-inch *lād*, out in the front. The *pheran* remains voluminous. I was also sceptical of bringing it here. This is as un-American as it gets. But a week ago, I took the bait of wearing it, feigning élan. It works. People like it and the other smaller *pherans* I keep on wearing. Though a friend did get curious, seeing me repeatedly wear these 'traditional clothes'. "Is it by any chance because you hate the West and are making a statement out of it?" I clarified; this was traditional 'winterwear'. I just like wearing it, I said.

But who knows if I was making a statement out of it? *Kashīr*, and any connection whatsoever with it, has always made me feel special. It is entirely possible that I show it off. Knowingly and unknowingly; before Indians and Americans.

"Where are you from in India?" - standard question anybody mildly interested in you will ask. "Oh! That's complicated." "How so?" "Umm...so, I belong to one part, Kashmir; I was born and brought up in another part - a small town in the east called Ranchi, but I live in yet another part – Delhi." "Oh Delhi!" "Yeah, Delhi." "That's so cool!" "Yeah."

Few understand the 'belong' part. You don't belong to places in America, in general. And certainly not if you have spent a grand total of 9 days in that place.

That fall night, there was a cool breeze, yet it was warm enough to sit outside. My favorite tree in the college courtyard was glowing. It was the tree, for me. In daylight, it was bright orange, shining above the humble green ones and making me smile. That night though, with the lamp shining right below its hood, it looked like it had been set on fire. The moon had long hidden itself; the sky was illuminated.

But the carpet of dried leaves at the bottom of the tree kept on growing with every gust of the wind. There were beautiful leaves up there – most had a shade of the lightest green at the base changing into the brightest red at the tip - but slowly and surely, the dried ones were falling off.

The moon had long hidden itself; the sky was illuminated, but the tree was undoubtedly dying.

I didn't understand what to make of it.

Or probably I did....

Then came *navsheen*. My dark and gloomy Yale suddenly metamorphosed into a white princess. Beautiful is a gross understatement.

People huddled indoors... I went walking out in the snow; I danced, out in the snow. I caught it with my

lips...I kissed it, I ate it. Euphoria is a shallow word. It was inexplicable.

This was way too similar to the first time I had ever seen falling snow. But that was *Kashīr*, right? This was America, for goodness' sake.

The happiness persisted. It felt like a new dawn....

Perhaps exile begins when you start making new homes, outside home. As someone who values stability zealously, I doubt if I have ever been able to have it truly, or ever will. I left Ranchi midway while growing up; I reached Delhi too old to really grow up there again. *Kashīr* I made up in my mind. None of them belong to me.

This place is different – I haven't joined it midway; I will not leave it midway. This is real. Nobody can kick me out of here. These four years are mine to make what I want of them. I will belong to them. And they will belong to me, forever.

Above this hard, strong, reality however, I will make my castle in the air.

Because thankfully, castles in the air don't need roots.

I will keep on thinking that I'm a Kashmiri, much as that Ingenious Gentleman, Don Quixote of La Mancha kept on thinking that he was a knight errant.

I will speak my language, till I am the last one left to speak it.

I will wear that *pheran*, with the *lād* taken out.

I will look at those orange elm trees in the fall as if they were the red Chinars of Tulmul.

I will look at the falling snow as if it were falling in Srinagar.

I will live what I can of my land. My grandmother's stories and my own eyes have given me enough to do that for a lifetime.

Oh, don't believe in it. It might be too hard for you.

Just like it was for the Kashmiri Muslim guy I met at JFK, traveling with his wife and baby.

"Tŏhy chhivú Kãshir?" I had asked, imitating Papa, when I had heard my tongue in the melee of the airport. He was speechless for a few moments. But his eyes betrayed his disbelief, in me. He couldn't believe that a Kashmiri-speaking Hindu girl, alone in America, could exist. Let alone the fact that she had asked him if he was a Kashmiri.

Perhaps exile begins when you start making new homes, outside home. As someone who values stability zealously, I doubt if I have ever been able to have it truly, or ever will. I left Ranchi midway while growing up; I reached Delhi too old to really grow up there again. Kashīr I made up in my mind. None of them belong to me.

Delude yourself. I will live on.

Burn my *pheran* and call it 'unfortunate'; I will keep the ashes. Shred it and call it 'a thing of the past'; I will keep the threads.

Because these aren't just any threads; they are the same ones that made my parents' *pherans*, my grandparents' *pherans*, my *bhagwanji's pheran*. They are the same threads that root me, that root that burning orange elm tree. The winds will come and go, and winter will approach. But I will be the last leaf. I will burn and never fall.

Let the moon hide itself; the sky will still shine.

Notes:

"Yi chhu pūrú Kashīr hyú" means "This is just like Kashmir."

A *pheran* is a loose fitting woollen gown, reaching below the knees.

Kadhāi is embroidery.

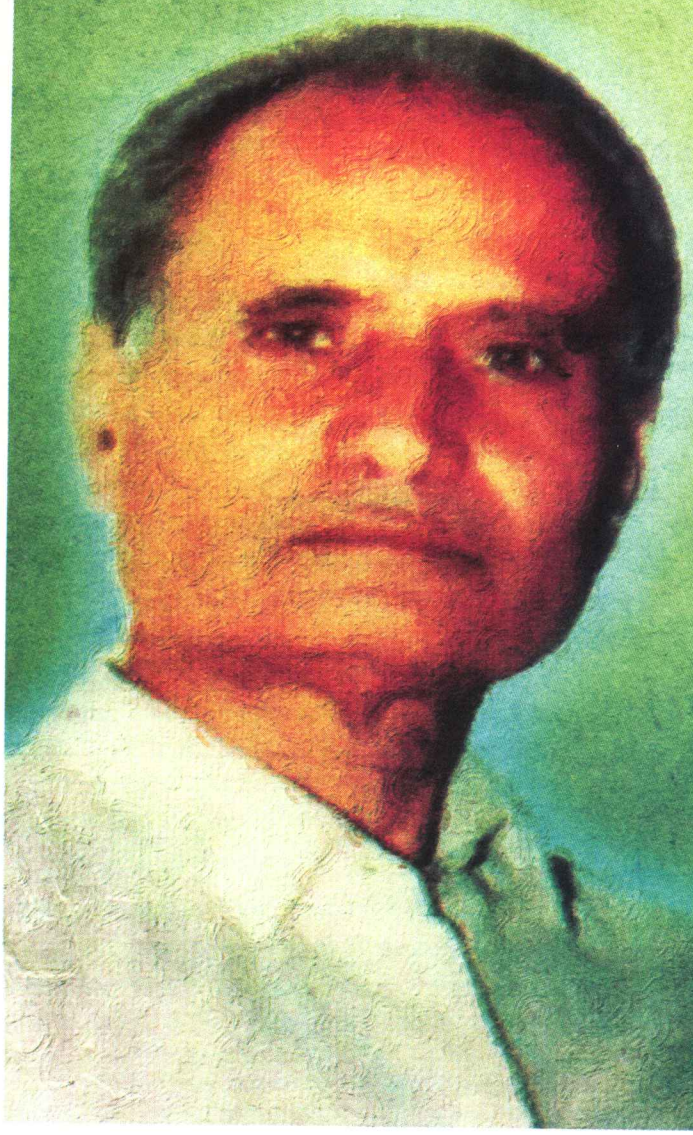
A *lād* is a fold made near the bottom of the *pheran* to reduce the length. The fold was made on the outside among the Hindus and on the inside among the Muslims.

Navsheen is the first day of snow in the winter.

The Chinar is an oriental plane tree, big, with maple-like leaves, indigenous to Greece and Turkey but very common in Kashmir.

Tulmul is a shrine devoted to the Mother Goddess in south Kashmir, held to be extremely sacred by Kashmiri Hindus.

कवि अर्जन देव 'मजबूर'
की स्मृति को समर्पित



Lidder Valley Man

The Himalayas ratted on the black road
Of uneven happenings.
There was a big noise.
Nothing could be seen.
The Vitasta flowed back to Neel Kunda
And coiled like a snake.
Rumblings were seen in the dreams.
Flowers ran away from the roofs
Made of birches

The seas merged.
Flames of the Volcanoes fell.
The smoke rose and hugged the sky
A boat saved the species.

A story teller sat on the ridge of a mountain
Like Kounser Nag on the brow of Panchala
And
Shone like a friend of Gangabal
The Man was born on the bank of the Lidder.

The Naga damsel dipped her beauty in Satisar
and played with the dew on
the leaf of the lotus plant.
She jumped and danced and went
to the spot on the Harmukh.

Golden pitchers came out of the lake
that had been a part of the sea.

Arjan Dev Majboor
Rememberences

Tribute

Majboor As I Knew Him

Arvind Gigoo

1991. Udhampur. I am walking on the road. My friend Vijay Zutshi introduces me to a tall, smart, well-dressed and clean-shaven man: 'Arjan Dev Majboor.....a poet.' The man smiles. He is affectionate. We sit in a roadside tea shop. Majboor talks about his poetry. I listen. He is a good talker. Then we talk about small things that make up life. We part company.

Some days pass. Zutshi and Majboor come to my 'home'. We sit in the room. Suddenly Majboor talks about Kashmir, his village Zainapur and the Standard Restaurant in the Anantnag town. He is obsessed with Kashmir. His nostalgia shows his pain. He misses his village which he romanticizes. Zutshi talks about his own paintings, sculptures and books which remained in his house in Anantnag. Majboor talks sorrowfully about his books and writings which he could not carry when he left Kashmir. I say: 'Is the beauty of the mountains and lakes and gardens and flowers more bewitching than the beauty of fall? One must experience fall and humiliation. We were pushed into mud. Let us learn to live in mud.'We exchange views.

Majboor talks sorrowfully about his books and writings which he could not carry when he left Kashmir. I say: 'Is the beauty of the mountains and lakes and gardens and flowers more bewitching than the beauty of fall? One must experience fall and humiliation. We were pushed into mud. Let us learn to live in mud.'

More days pass. I visit Majboor's place. A good house! His room is full of books. There are sheets of white paper on his writing desk. 'I like good quality paper.' A painting of Vijay Zutshi is hanging on the wall. 'Martand Ruins'. It is very beautiful. There are many dictionaries. A white-haired gentleman enters. He is Makhan Lal Goja. He tells me: 'I am a vagabond.' He talks about his life and exploits. A real vagabond! I think: 'He is like me. I have all along been a loafer.....a tramp. But I won't reveal myself. I don't.' Soon P K Goja, P L Goja, Bushan Lal Kaul (known as Dr. Bushan Lal) and Vijay Zutshi join. We have oceans and oceans of tea. M L Goja is a heavy smoker but he can't compete me. We laugh and talk. Vijay Zutshi asks Majboor to recite his poems. I see mischief in Zutshi's eyes and smile. He goads Majboor to read out his Kashmiri poems. I think: 'Zutshi is pricking him.' Majboor feels happy and recites

poem after poem. All are thrilled and amused. Poets never see through mischief. P L Goja recites the verses of Ghalib and Majaz and Faiz. He is good at Urdu. P K Goja is a very talkative man. M L Goja talks about Ashtavakra, Aubrey Menen and Herman Hesse. He is a landscape artist who loves tea, smoking and drinking. Dr. Bhushan Lal is an old friend of mine. He knows how to laugh. The conversation touches Communism. 'Communism?' I think. Majboor talks about Progressive Movement. 'Progressive!?', I say, 'Who is progressive?' In the evening, we drink and disperse very late in the night.

Majboor and I are close now. One day he opens his heart: 'I tell my children, grandchildren and other members of my family that they will know my worth when I am gone, when I am dead.' Majboor always remains in his room. He is an 'outsider' even in his home. His daughter-in-law is very caring. (I salute her.) Whenever I go to Majboor's home I find him writing. It is prose in Hindi and Urdu. It is poetry in Kashmiri. It is translation. He recites Persian and Sanskrit verses.

Dear Reader, i have bored you and angered you. I will change the tense now.

Yeterday Majboor recited long passages from *Obra Shech*, his translation of *Meghdootam* of Kalidas. It was brilliant. Enthralling! The room resonated. Majboor's voice was marvellous. I was all attention. I was breathless. I am a good listener. Lyrical quality and imagery were splendid. (I am sorry for having used literary terms). Recitation of *Obra Shech* gave me immense joy.

(1) The scene changed.

Majboor talked about his involvement in Democratic National Conference. He talked about his determination in youth to create a classless society in Kashmir. He talked about his association with politicians. I said: 'You have wasted your time in politics.' He readily agreed but said, 'I have not wasted even a single minute so far as my writing goes.' He talked about his poverty, life in his village, schooling in Srinagar, his ambitions, his restlessness, his education in Lahore, his association with writers and scholars, his hard life, years of unemployment and his passion to change society.

Majboor is an egoist. He does not mix with the commoners, the ordinary---those who constitute mankind. 'How does he feel comfortable in my company?' I wonder. He is a disciplinarian. He demands respect from others. He scolded the organizer of a literary function because he had made a minor mistake.

'Have you ever fallen in love?'

The reply is a smile.

Majboor is romantic. He is an adventurer. At this age he went to Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kolkata, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Kashmir and some other places. He is inquisitive. He loves to take the photographs of historical places.

Majboor lives life on his terms. He loves freedom.

From Kashmir he came with a bottle filled with the water of the Vitasta and kept it on a shelf in the drawing room. He showed the bottle to all who came to his house. There was a lovely child in him. At times he was naïve and even gullible. These made him beautiful.

Majboor invited Vijay Zutshi, P K Goja and me to his place. He had written a novel in Kashmiri. He started reading out the novel to us. Somebody pinched me. It was Goja. I had fallen asleep. Next day he read out some essays to us. He showed us some critical analyses and travelogues.

Some other day.

'I don't understand many Kashmiri words that you have used in your poems.'

'I love to use archaic words.'

Yeterday Majboor recited long passages from *Obra Shech*, his translation of *Meghdootam* of Kalidas. It was brilliant. Enthralling! The room resonated. Majboor's voice was marvellous. I was all attention. I was breathless. I am a good listener. Lyrical quality and imagery were splendid. (I am sorry for having used literary terms). Recitation of *Obra Shech* gave me

'Which Kashmiri poet has influenced you?'

'None.'

'Your inspiration?'

'None. I am self-made.'

'You describe nature in most of your exile poems. Where is man?'

'The objects of nature symbolize man.'

Majboor was a lover of good food, spicy mutton and tasty dishes. He was a man of strong likes and dislikes. He never indulged in backbiting. I never found him discussing persons critically. One evening he got tipsy at 'my place'. He spent the night with me. Nobody had the guts to question him.

Next day.

'Listen to this poem. It is titled *thukthuk.*' I listen. One of his best poems. Depicts the cultural history of Kashmir. The last stanza is superb. Shows the horror of militancy.

'How did the idea of writing *Thu Thuk* come to you?'

'I was watching an advertisement on TV: 'Knock Knock'.'

'It reminds me of 'knock knock knock' in Shakespeare's *Macbeth.*'

'Listen to this poem. It is titled ***thukthuk.***' I listen. One of his best poems. Depicts the cultural history of Kashmir. The last stanza is superb. Shows the horror of militancy.

'How did the idea of writing ***Thu Thuk*** come to you?'

'I was watching an advertisement on TV: 'Knock Knock'.'

'It reminds me of 'knock knock knock' in Shakespeare's ***Macbeth.***'

(2) Majboor never accepted defeat. He knew how to get things done. He involved his grandchildren in his literary work. He sent them on errands. I never liked it.

'Will you translate some of my poems into English?'

I start working. Majboor is in haste. He is keen about quantity. Whenever he comes to my 'home' he finds me sleeping.

I translated forty Kashmiri poems into English. I went on polishing and polishing them. It took months. He lost patience. He wanted me to work quickly. One day I handed over twenty-six poems to him.

'Where are the remaining poems?'

'I rejected them. But I will not give you the rejected ones because I know that you will publish them. And I will not translate any more.'

Majboor became sad.

After a couple of months *Waves* was published. The second edition (containing thirty translations) is better than the first. The drawings of Vijay Zutshi are breathtaking. *Waves* got an award in Kolkata. Majboor came back an excited man.

Majboor throws a party. There are about twenty persons. We have drinks. Vijay Zutshi and P K Goja sing songs. Others recite verses. I laugh and make others laugh. Humour is my weapon to fight my shyness and to conceal the real 'i' in me. I love my foolishness. We have more drinks. And then an excellent dinner is served.

- Majboor and I are talking. Moti Lal Saqi comes. He recites a poem on migration, loss and home. He goes on weeping. 'My soul is wounded', Saqi says sobbing.
- My illiterate old mother calls Majboor ' Mehjoor Sahib'. She refuses to be corrected.
- Majboor is very good learner.
- Majboor doesn't pay much attention to the get-up of his books---the cover, calligraphy and the quality of paper. 'You know my financial condition.'
- Majboor, Vijay Zutshi, P K Goja and I empty Chivas Regal. Majboor recites his long poem *Tyŏl.* His voice is resonant. The poem is a succession of images. Rhythmic. Musical. A swan flies to Kashmir.
- R L Bhat's *Arjan Dev Majboor*---a collection of critical essays on *Waves*---is published. Majboor is happy.

'• What do you like?'

(Majboor wants to give me a gift.)

' Don't make me fall in my eyes. And don't force me to misunderstand the gesture.'

'• This is Bimla Raina.' Majboor is all praise for Bimla's poetry, her symbols and her handling of myths. I am ignorant. Majboor and Bimla talk about Kashmiri poetry. Bimla is an excellent conversationalist.

Zutshis and Gojas shifted to Jammu. 'All writers and poets are in Jammu. Literary activities happen there. I also want to shift to Jammu.'

And one day Majboor and his family shifted to Jammu.

• Dogra Hall. Jammu. Sudhir, an actor, dramatizes Kshama Kaul's Hindi translation of Majboor's *Thuk Thuk*. The last portion of the poem creates an atmosphere of terror---terror of militancy. There is not even a whisper in the hall. Such is the effect of art. I find tears in the eyes of some. There is applause. Majboor is watching his success.

(3) Abhinav Theatre. Jammu. A CD of Majboor's songs is released. The songs are sung by Shamima Dev Azad and Rashid Farash. Pandit Bhajan Sopori has composed the music. When the CD is played there is a sad silence in the hall. Nostalgia is evoked especially when Majboor's *Yeli Yād pyvān sonhāry vatan* is played. Majboor feels triumphant.

•Majboor, Santoshi and R L Bhat are in Majboor's house. I enter. They are talking about Shaivism, Shiv Sutra, Abhinavgupta, Shankaracharya and Osho. I have never understood Shaivism. I remain silent. As they talk, I fall asleep. When I wake up I quote: 'Blessed be he who invented sleep.' They laugh.

Majboor is very ill. He is unable to move. Adarsh Ajit, a writer, is interviewing him. Majboor is mentally alert. Today he is critical. But he is talking about his book which is under print.

'My body is gone but my mind is active.' His wife, son, daughter-in-law and daughters take good care of him, look after him very well. He becomes happy when somebody visits him.

'• Please translate these four poems into English. The editor of a journal needs them.'

'Just now'

I translate the four poems into English.

'You have wasted your life.'

'Life is meant to be wasted.'

Majboor becomes serious.

• *Kashmir Sentinel* has brought out a special issue dedicated to Majboor. I come to know that Majboor has written some short stories too.

•There are hundreds of books in the almirahs.

'You should donate these books to a library.'

'Yes. I am thinking on these lines.'

There are many unpublished writings in Majboor's room.

Majboor wrote his *Yādan hund safar* during his illness.

'• Why didn't you write about women in *Yādan hund safar*?'

Majboor chuckles.

'Kashmiri writers don't depict sexual acts in their writings. Why?'

There is silence.

Majboor is very ill. He is unable to move. Adarsh Ajit, a writer, is interviewing him. Majboor is mentally alert. Today he is critical. But he is talking about his book which is under print.

Tribute

Arjan Dev Majboor: The Poet Who Will Never Die

Neeraj Santoshi

Each day

I light a lamp in the whirlwind

I am a stage of the caravan

Peep into me

and listen to the ancient ballad.

It is endless.....

(From a poem by Arjan Dev Majboor)

Wherever Arjan Dev Majboor is at present, I know his ink-stained fingers will be itching to write, for putting on paper what has remained unsaid, unfinished. The poetry of snow, silence and waves, of longing and optimism, will continue to resonate deep and far and reveal in which heart Majboor has taken a new birth. He will continue to live in our hearts, in the songs of our future generations. For now, he seems to have found some secret place to keep humming his soulful poetry, his songs of earth and solitude, of exile and yearning.

As I heard the news of Arjan Dev Majboor's passing away on the morning of Thursday, December 16, 2010, a flood of memories gushed inside me. I felt that a wound has opened that will keep on bleeding. With the demise of Majboor, one of the greatest of contemporary Kashmiri writers, something has died in all of us too -- we who love Kashmir and its ethos. I often used to talk to him about literary issues and used to do stories on his literary plans and projects, often wondering about his tremendous zest for life, his vigorous passion for writing, his inner dynamism in spite of being often ill, and an insatiable urge to be creative even in his mid-eighties.

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When I met him last, it was two years back at his residence; I pressed him for writing his autobiography, which, I felt, would be a priceless contribution to Kashmiri literary and cultural history spanning over six decades. I told him that it would be a reliable account of the movements that

emerged in these fields and then faded away; it would record the oral history of Kashmiri society, presented by a man who knew and had interacted with almost all the topmost figures of the twentieth century Kashmir. He told me that he very much wanted to write it, but could not do so because of his illness. If there were someone who was ready to take down what he said, he would gladly go down the memory lane and record whatever he could remember, he told me. I promised that I would try to find someone, but I could not. Those days he was also very enthusiastic about writing 'Vanvās', a novel in which he intended to portray the saga of Kashmiri Pandits' exile from the point of view of a poet. He wanted to finish it as early as possible as he knew that his ill health would not give him much time. I don't know whether he finished the novel or not.

I have many fond memories of this grand old man of Kashmiri literature. He used to come to our house in Jammu and my father used to visit him oft and on. Majboor would sometimes scold my father affectionately for not visiting him. I often used to tell Kashmiri writers and scholars that Majboor had not been given his due credit and recognition for what he had done and what he had achieved, especially by the powers that be, who many a times showered neophytes for their average books with prestigious awards.

I often used to tell Kashmiri writers and scholars that Majboor had not been given his due credit and recognition for what he had done and what he had achieved, especially by the powers that be, who many a times showered neophytes for their average books with prestigious awards. One scholar even told me that had Majboor been from the "other faith", he would have been in a much better place, and much better recognized and credited.

One scholar even told me that had Majboor been from the "other faith", he would have been in a much better place, and much better recognized and credited. I don't know how much truth there is in that, but posterity will have to answer such questions.

His contributions to Kashmir literature are immense. Besides authoring over two dozen books, he also translated the Nīlmat Purān, a 6th-7th century AD Sanskrit text that depicts the cultural and social history of people in ancient Kashmir, as part of a project for the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. The project was entrusted to Majboor, as he was among the very few scholars who were proficient in both Sanskrit and Persian, besides being well aware of the history and culture of Kashmir. After three years of painstaking research, the ailing Majboor completed the work in a 400-page manuscript.

When I talked to him about doing a story on it, he told me "The Nīlmat Purān is a historical work of immense importance, which had to be made available to a wider readership in the Urdu world. It has given me tremendous satisfaction to translate this text from Sanskrit, as it is one of the most quoted text from Kashmir. I not only translated the 1400 verses of the Purān into Urdu, but also wrote nearly a 100-page introductory about the Purān for the benefit of Urdu readers, who may not be aware about the background of the Purān".

To make 3000 years of history available to people in Kashmir in their own mother tongue, he also contributed in the mega project of translating Kalhana's Rajatarangini into Kashmiri. The J&K government took his services among others for the ambitious project in 2001-2002

When I talked to him about the project, he said to me, "The Rajatarangini as a text holds a very important place in the history of India as a whole, as writing history was generally not a tradition in ancient India. Though ancient literature is rich, it lacks historiographical writing, with most of ancient texts related to science, philosophical, moral and metaphysical subjects. Viewed in this light, the Rajatarangini is a unique Sanskrit text which has all the ingredients of history".

His infectious passion for literature and aesthetics was a source of inspiration for budding writers in the state. For his vast knowledge of the Kashmiri literature written over the last six decades, many people used to call him a walking encyclopedia.

Majboor was a multi-faceted personality. Though he primarily wrote poetry in Kashmiri, he also contributed to other languages, including Hindi, English, Sanskrit and Persian. Majboor's first collection of poems Kalām-e-Majboor was published in 1955, followed by Dashahār in 1983, Dazavùny Kosam in 1987, Pàdy Samayik in 1993 and Tyŏl in 1995.

Proficient in Sanskrit, Majboor was the first person to have translated Kalidas' Meghadūtam into Kashmiri verse. The English translation of his poems under the title 'Waves' by Arvind Gigoo has been critically acclaimed by the literary community across the world.

The best tribute that we could pay to Majboor is to

I spent my age
writing this legend
But the pages
leapt towards the sky
A dusty cobweb
besieged me.
Time was at work
The fault was not mine
A few moments were given to me in trust
The world maligned me
Now
stranded in wilderness
I
wait for
the tree,
the water
and
the light
I am a mosaic.
My glass-house will not crumble..
Each day
I light a lamp in the whirlwind
I am a stage of the caravan.
Peep into me
and listen to the ancient ballad.
It is endless.....

(From 'Waves')

Translated by Arvind Gigoo

Poetry

Two Poems

Arjan Dev Majboor

Translated by Arvind Gigoo

Time

Forgotten memories
and
the heart rending
serpent
tore my heart.
She plaited her hair,
lit a lamp
and
spoke a riddle.
There was lightning
and
the flames went up.
Worry burst out
mysteriously.
The sun plays
a new game
in the blue sea.
It appeared
and
shone in the reflection
of the
shade.
Two infants
gripped the root of a
tree.

The whirlpool of
worries
flowed,
the cosmos stopped its
journey
some stars
faded on the edge of
the sky.
The moon
forgot
its beams.

In this age of topsy-
turvydom
a leaf
hangs
on the top of a tree

Should I wait
or
jump upon the earth?
The sky dreads
men live
in the ant hills
There are no walls
but

Nagraay

Speak
where will you go now?
What solution lies
in your hands?
You will be known
By your face
They will burn you
what place are you from?
You came out of
the tremendous oceans
and
rivers.
The peaks of worries face
you
the roads
are
covered with dust.
Where will you go now?
The lotus
entrapped you,
the colour of the spring
flew.
The rays of the sun
suck the barren land.
There is none
to protect
the dancing dew.
Cupid too is all ash.
Who are you writing to?
There is a curse on
settlements,
the gardens of life
sob.
Spending one day
is
crossing a mountain.
Don't sing
fearlessly
in the city.
You will be sold
for a coin
Don't go towards a ghat
The Vitasta
is all blood
and
poison.

The dead bodies of
women
are without shrouds.
In the past
they
longed for children
from the river.
When
the lamps flowed with
the water
we had dreams.
The wishes
remain
unfilled
Rest a while
when you
climb the mountain
and
watch
the daggers dance
under the chinar trees.
Listen,
the colourful valley
burnt
because of the bombs.
Where do you have to go?
Where is the way?
There is a tempest
in the valley
of the seers.
Heemal has risen
from a deep sleep.
Nobody showed
love to her.
Show strength
and
walk through the forests and
the thorns
Experience
pain and agony
and
then breathe.
The hawks
are
flying over the mountains.
They will drink your blood.

संस्मरण

वागर्थ के साधक अर्जनदेव मजबूर

चन्द्रकान्ता

बर्फ के ताज धरे संगरमाल की गोद में बसे, निःसर्ग के अकूत सौंन्दर्य को पलकें उघाड़ कर देखते, कश्मीर के ऐतिहासिक गाँव ज़ैनपुरा में जन्मे–जिये मजबूर साहब अपनी यात्रा पूरी कर चले गए, कश्मीर काव्य–जगत में एक गहन विवर छोड़ कर। कश्मीर की सांस्कृतिक विरासतों से गर्वित, यह अनुपम शब्द शिल्पी, ताउम्र, सतीसर के प्राकृतिक वैभव और साहित्यिक धरोहरों को शब्द–ब्रह्म में संजोता, यहाँ के इतिहास–पुराण की गौरव गाथायें गाता श्रोता–पाठक को मंत्र–मुग्ध करता रहा, और कश्मीरी काव्य–कोश को सम्पन्न।

कश्मीर की सांस्कृतिक विरासतों से गर्वित, यह अनुपम शब्द शिल्पी, ताउम्र, सतीसर के प्राकृतिक वैभव और साहित्यिक धरोहरों को शब्द–ब्रह्म में संजोता, यहाँ के इतिहास–पुराण की गौरव गाथायें गाता श्रोता–पाठक को मंत्र–मुग्ध करता रहा, और कश्मीरी काव्य–कोश को सम्पन्न।

मजबूर साहब से मेरी पहली मुलाकात 1986 ई॰ में हुई, जब मै भुवनेश्वर से घरवालों से मिलने कर्णनगर (ससुराल) आई थी। यों 1984 में, जब राजकमल प्रकाशन से, कशमीर संबंधित मेरा उपन्यास, 'ऐलान गली जिन्दा है' छप कर आया, उन्हीं दिनों मजबूर साहब का पहला पत्र मुझे मिला था। तब मेरे पति डा॰ विशिन भुवनेश्वर में कार्यरत थे। मजबूर साहब का पत्र निश्छल आत्मीयता और प्रशंसा से पुरा तो था ही, साथ ही घर से दूर रह रही एक बहन के साहित्यिक अवदान के लिए, गर्व भरे अहसासों और शुभकामनाओं से सिक्त भी था। वह उपन्यास पढ़ कर लिखा गया पत्र, मुझे उनके उदार और मुक्त मन की झलक दे गया, बल्कि कुछ शब्द तो मुझे भिगो गए थे। उन्होंने लिखा था, ''जो काम कश्मीर में रहकर हम नहीं कर पाए, वह मेरी एक बहन ने, घर से हज़ारों मील दूर रहकर किया है। सच कहूँ तो तुम्हारा यह उपन्यास पढ़ कर मेरा सिर गर्व से ऊँचा हो गया। तुमने पहली बार, कश्मीर की सामाजिक संस्कृति और लोक जीवन को वृहत्तर हिन्दी जगत तक पहुँचा कर, आम भारतीय पाठक का यह मिथ्या भ्रम दूर कर दिया है कि कश्मीर झीलों–झरनों व हिम आच्छादित पर्वतों की ही सौंन्दर्यस्थली मात्र है, या राजनैतिक मुद्दा भर। इस उपन्यास के माध्यम से हिन्दी पाठक जान गया कि कश्मीर में एक समृद्ध संस्कृति और सर्वधर्म समभाव से रचा लोक समाज है '' उसके साथ ही मजबूर साहब से पत्रों का सिलसिला चलता रहा, और हम एक दूसरे के व्यक्ति–कृतित्व से परिचित होते रहे। 1986 में वे ज़ैनपुरा से मेरे घर कर्णनगर मिलने आए, बैग में अपने बागीचे के सेब लेकर। बातचीत के दौरान उनका अनौपचारिक रवैया और उदार व्यक्तित्व परत–दर–परत खुलता गया। खेमेबंदियों से दूर, मुक्त भाव से पसंदीदा रचनाओं की प्रशंसा करना और अपना सर्वोत्तम साहित्य को देने का उनका संकल्प, अभिभूत करने वाला था। 1924 ई॰ में जन्मे मजबूर साहब तब उम्र के साठ वर्ष पूरे कर चुके थे और कश्मीरी भाषा–साहित्य को बीसेक उत्कृष्ठ पुस्तकें दे चुके थे।

कश्मीरी काव्य के ख्याति–स्तम्भ अब्दुल अहद आज़ाद, दीनानाथ–नादिम, मास्टर ज़िन्दा कौल और रहमान राही उनकी काव्य यात्रा के सहयात्री रहे। कालान्तर में मजबूर साहब अपनी उदार सोच, शाश्वतता में आस्था और सार्थक जीवन मूल्यों को अर्थ देने वाली दृ ट के साथ, कलात्मक भाषा और अभिव्यक्ति और निश्छल आचरण पर उन्होंने अहंकार और तुच्छता के दाग नहीं लगने दिए। मुझसे मिले तो अपनेपन के अधिकार से मुझे दूरदर्शन केन्द्र और आकाशवाणी ले गए जहाँ श्री रफीक मसूदी ने मेरा साक्षात्कार लिया और दूरदर्शन के डायरेक्टर पंड़ित लस कौल, जिनकी बाद में आतंकवादियों ने हत्या की, से लंबी बातचीत हुई।

मजबूर साहब ने जे॰ के॰ अकादमी के टेंग साहब और यशस्वी कवि मोतीलाल साक़ी से मेरा साहित्यक परिचय कुछ इस तरह कराया जैसे वे अपनी निजी उपलब्धियाँ गिना रहें हों। कश्मीर की बेटी ने हिन्दी साहित्य को जो भी थोड़ा–बहुत योगदान दिया था, उससे वह भावुकता की हद तक प्रसन्न थे। ईर्ष्या, द्वेष और कुढ़न से अनछुआ उनका मन सचमुच बहुत बड़ा था। मुझे याद है कश्मीर की एक लेखिका ने 'पहल' में 'ऐलान गली' उपन्यास पर समीक्षा के बहाने कुछ निहायत पूर्वाग्रही ऊटपटांग बातें लिखी थीं, जिससे वे बहुत दुःखी हो गए थे। उसे लेकर एक लम्बा पत्र उन्होंने मुझे लिखा था। शायद सोचा हो, मुझे बुरा लगा हो, गोकि मैंने उन बेसिर पैर फतवों का नोटिस भी न लिया था, क्योंकि उनसे नज़र लेखिका की साहित्य संबंधी समझ का उथलापन ही नज़र आता था। बहरहाल!

कश्मीर के अप्रतिम सौन्दर्य और सांस्कृतिक धरोहरों के गीत लिखता यह संवेदनशील रचनाकार, मात्र कविता तक ही सीमित नहीं रहा। गद्य लेखन और अनुवाद क्षेत्र में इनका विपुल योगदान रहा। कालिदास की अमर कृति मेघदूत का अनुवाद, 'ओबुर श्येछ इनकी कश्मीरी साहित्य को अनुवाद के माध्यम से दी गई अनुपम देन है। कृष्ण जू राज़दान ललद्यद, रसूल पोंपुर, मोतीलाल साकी जैसे सशक्त कश्मीरी कवियों की रचनाओं का हिन्दी में अनुवाद कर उन्होंने कश्मीरी काव्य की संपन्नता से हिन्दी जगत को परिचित कराया। भारतीय ज्ञानपीठ द्वारा प्रकाशित भारतीय कविताएँ हों, साहित्य अकादमी, नई दिल्ली, या जम्मू–कश्मीर कल्चरल अकादमी के अनुवाद ग्रन्थ हो, मजबूर साहब का नाम सक्षम अनुवादकों में जरूर दर्ज होगा। नुन्दऋषि के श्रुखों ललद्यद के वाखों, दीनानाथ नादिम की शायरी और अहद ज़रगर के शास्त्रीय कलामों के अनुवाद इनकी उपलब्धियाँ कहीं जा सकती हैं। जन्मभूमि कश्मीर से अज़हद प्यार करने वाले मजबूर साहब ने नीलमत पुराण से लेकर कश्मीर के इतिहास, बौद्ध, हिन्दू, डोगरा और इस्लामी संस्कृति पर शोधपूर्ण ग्रन्थ लिखकर अपनी मातृभूमि की धरोहरों से वृहत साहित्य जगत को परिचित कराया। वे तमाम उम्र शोधार्थी रहे। अनेक सांस्कृतिक–साहित्यक संस्थाओं एवं संगठनों से जुड़े मजबूर साहब ने सामाजिक और शैक्षणिक आन्दोलनों में भी सक्रिय भूमिका निभाई। कश्मीर की सौहार्द पूर्ण विरासतों के गीत लिखता यह संवेदनशील रचनाकार अंत में एक विस्थापित का जीवन जीने को अभिशप्त हो गया। विस्थापितों को अपने पुरखों की धरती पर अन्तिम सेज भी कहाँ मिलती है। जो मजबूर साहब या मोतीलाल साकी को मिलती, जिन्होने जन्मभूमि से निर्वासन की पीड़ा को मर्मान्तक अभिव्यक्ति दी। साकी ने कहा था, 'घर खोना जिंदा ही चिता पर जलने के समान है, घर खोने का दुःख वही जानता है, जिसने अपना घर खोया हो', मजबूर साहब ने स्वर्ग से सुंदर अपनी घरती को रक्तंरजित नरक में तब्दील होते देखा, जो किसी भी भुक्तभोगी के लिए घातक होता है। संवेदनशील रचनाकार के लिए तो ऐसी स्थिति, न पुरने वाल ज़ख्म बन जाती है। कितना बड़ा विद्रूप है कि मनुष्य की अजेय ऊर्जा में विश्वास रखने वाले मजबूर साहब ने, न सिर्फ उस ऊर्जा के स्रोत को सूखते देखा बल्कि सदियों से शैव, बौद्ध और इस्लाम की सांझी परम्पराओं से पोसी गई ऋषि–सूफी जीवन शैली को ध्वस्त होते देखने की यातना भी सही। उनकी कलम ने चीत्कार सा प्रश्न किया कि सभी सत्य, विश्व के सभी दर्शन सभी नीति–विधान, सभ्यता के महल संस्कृति के शिखर क्यों बौने पड़ जाते हैं, एक गोली के सामने?

कश्मीर की सौहार्द पूर्ण विरासतों के गीत लिखता यह संवेदनशील रचनाकार अंत में एक विस्थापित का जीवन जीने को अभिशप्त हो गया। विस्थापितों को अपने पुरखों की धरती पर अन्तिम सेज भी कहाँ मिलती है। जो मजबूर साहब या मोतीलाल साकी को मिलती, जिन्होने जन्मभूमि से निर्वासन की पीड़ा को मर्मान्तक अभिव्यक्ति दी।

पिछले वर्ष डॉ॰ शांत के साथ मैं जम्मू में उनके निवास पर उनसे मिलने गई। कुछ समय से वे बीमार चल रहे थे। अपने परिजनों के बीच रहकर भी खुद को भीतर से अकेला महसूस कर रहे थे। अपनी मिट्टी से उखड़ने की पीड़ा भीतर ही भीतर उन्हें सालती थी। लेकिन शरीर क्षीण होने के बावजूद उनका रचनाकार शिथिल नहीं हुआ था। उन्होंने मुझे अग्रेज़ी और उर्दू में अनूदित अपनी दो पुस्तकें भेंट की और कहा, दन पर कुछ लिखना। मैं बितार पर पड़े उनके शरीर के ढ़ाँचे को देखकर द्रवित हो गई, पर उनकी हार न मानने की ज़िद के आगे नतमस्तक हो गई। उनके कमरे की खिड़की से हैबिस्कस के ठिंगने झाड़ के पार कच्चे–पक्के मकान दिखाई दे रहे थे, जिनमे शहर से दूर उस बियाबान में कई विस्थापित कश्मीरी शरण ले रहे थे। यहाँ न हरमुख पर्वत पर झरता सुनहरी प्रकाश था, न शाहे चिनार, वीर कीकर की छतनार छाँह केसर के फूलों की रंगोबू और संतूर की धुनें उनकी स्मृतियों के गहवर में ही महक–गूंज रही थीं।

'दशहार', 'दज़वुनि 'कोसम', संगर तू 'संगरमाल से पॅद्य–समयिक्य मापता 'त्योल' का रचनाकार कवि, अतीत और वर्तमान के बीच पड़ी दरारों–खाईयों को तन–मन से पाटता, बेहद मार्मिक प्रयासों से, उम्मीदों के बुझते दीयों को कलम की ओट देकर बाले रखना चाहता था। मनुष्य और मानवीयता में विश्वास रखने वाले मजबूर साहब ने विस्थापन का त्रास भोगते भी उम्मीद का दामन नहीं छोड़ा, न जीवन संघर्षों से मुँह मोड़ा। इतिहास के ज्ञाता थे, जानते थे सदियों पहले वादी में कश्मीरी पंडित ग्यारह घरों में सिमट कर भी अंततः लाखों की तादाद में बस गए थे। तब भी एक प्रलय आई थी, आज भी आतंक का चेहरा लिए प्रलय ही आई है, कारण भिन्न हों पर त्रासदी वही है। तब मनुष्य और मानवीयता को बचाने कुछ मसीहाओं ने जन्म लिया है, आज महामानवों का युग नहीं है। सत्ता और स्वार्थ हर शै पर हावी है, इसीसे अवशता और नाउम्मीदी ज़्यादा है। इसका विकट अनुभव हम सब की तरह उनका भी रहा।

मजबूर साहब कलम की ताकत में विश्वास रखते थे। वे एक नई

दुनिया की तामीर करना चाहते थे। रचनाकारों से कहते थे, 'रछ़राव–खम्बर यिम याद वतिव। अतलास वलुख संगम्य सोचिक्य। अख नोव दुनिया तखलीकि करुन।'

परम्परा से पोषित, नवीनता का स्वागत करता एक नया युग उनका सपना था। आतंकी समय में उनका सपना बिखर गया, लेकिन भरोसा नहीं टूटा। इसी भरोसे ने शब्द–शिल्पी से गुहार कराई, "मेरे शब्दों में लौटा दे अर्थ। मुझे वापस कर दे मेरा प्रेम, मेरा वसन्त, मेरा सूर्योदय, मेरे फूल, मेरी सुगन्ध, मैं देखना चाहता हूँ सब कुछ, फिर से स्वच्छ_"।

वे विषबुझे मनों में शहद घोलना चाहते थे। अँधेरे रास्तों पर जलते चिराग रखना चाहते थे। लेकिन स्मृतियाँ अब सुखद नहीं रही थीं। लहू की हर बूंद से असहायता टपक रही थी। घर, नदी, पेड़ों को ही उन्होंने काँपते नहीं देखा, उम्मीदों का कंपन भी महसूस किया। झुलसे हुए घरों, सन्नाटों और भाड़यत्रों के समय का लहूलुहान वर्तमान और अनिश्चित भविष्य देखा और देखे रिसते हुए घाव छिपाए जीवन जीते लोग। वे कहते हैं, शहर में एक पागल ऊँट घुस आया है, जिसके आतंक से उपजा स्याह डर रोम–रोम में ज़हर की तरह फैलता जा रहा है। हालात से बेचैन मजबूर साहब ने शहर की बदली फिज़ा और उससे प्रभावित लोगों की व्यथा को स्वर दिया। वादी में रहते दोस्तों को भी चुप और गूंगा होते देखा, क्योंकि वहां आज आवाज़ निकालना गुनाह है। लोग अब जूते पैरों में नहीं सिर पर रखे घूम रहे थे। कौव्वे शहर में दिखाई नहीं देते, क्योंकि उनको भात खिलाने वाले शहर से कूच कर गए हैं। लेकिन काले कौव्वे की तरह ही शहर में सब कुछ स्याह लग रहा था। पागल ऊँट कुछ लोगों को पागल बना गया और वे उसे स्वतंत्रता का प्रतीक मानने लगे। मजबूर साहब इस पागलपन के फैलाव से त्रस्त रहे। दो वर्ष पहले वे अपने बेटे नागराज के पास दिल्ली आए थे। शरीर ठीक नहीं रहता था, कुछ डॉक्टरों से सलाह लेना चाहते थे। फोन पर मुझसे बात की तो मैं और डॉ॰ विशिन उनसे मिलने द्वारका गए। हमारे विशेष आग्रह पर उन्होंने हमें कई कविताएँ सुनाईं। 'कथगोर' से लेकर 'दज़वुनि कोसम' और ताज़ा रची कविताएँ। कविता उनके लिए अंतःकरण की आवाज़ थी। उनमें उनका जीवन दर्शन, व्यवस्था का विद्रूप और मनुष्य की चिन्ता थी। उनके काव्य–पाठ का ढंग भी सम्मोहित करने वाला था। विस्थापना की पीड़ा को जो कलात्मक अभिव्यक्ति उन्होंने दी थी वह मर्म को छूने वाली थी। हम उनके दुख के सहभागी थे। देर तक उनको सुनते रहे। उनकी कविताओं में कश्मीरी भाषा का लावण्य और भाव संवेदन का घनत्व इतना अभिभूत करने वाला था, कि उन्हें घंटों सुनते रहे पर मन तृप्त नहीं हुआ। मेरे वैज्ञानिक पति उनकी कविता के सम्मोहन से इतने भाव विभोर हुए कि वहाँ से उठने के लिए कई बार टहोकना पड़ा। उनकी बहूरानी इस बीच तीन बार हमें चाय पिला गई– कहवा, शीरचाय और लिपटन भी। मजबूर साहब बीच–बीच में चाय के घूँट भरते रहे और काव्य धारा से हमें भिगोते रहे। अद्भुत था उन्हें सुनना। मजबूर साहब के व्यक्तिव और कृतित्व को जानने का एक नायाब मौका भी। सुल्तान ज़ैनुलाबदीन, 'बडशाह' के नामवाले ज़ैनपुरा के रहवासी मजबूर साहब शायद मन ही मन बडशाह के लौटने का इंतज़ार करते रहे, उस बड़शाह का, जिसने बेघर–बेरोज़गार हुए निष्कासित पंडितों को ससम्मान वादी में वापस बुला कर फिर से फलने–फूलने का मौका दिया था। और अपने पिता सिकन्दर के पापों का प्रायश्चित किया था। कश्मीर का इतिहास तो पुनरावृत्तियों का इतिहास है, क्या अपने स्वतंत्र राष्ट्र में पुरखों की घरती से उखड़े हुए कश्मीरी पंडित फिर से अपने घरों में आबाद नहीं हो सकते।

उनके काव्य–पाठ का ढंग भी सम्मोहित करने वाला था। विस्थापना की पीड़ा को जो कलात्मक अभिव्यक्ति उन्होंने दी थी वह मर्म को छूने वाली थी। हम उनके दुख के सहभागी थे। देर तक उनको सुनते रहे। उनकी कविताओं में कश्मीरी भाषा का लावण्य और भाव संवेदन का घनत्व इतना अभिभूत करने वाला था, कि उन्हें घंटों सुनते रहे पर मन तृप्त नहीं हुआ।

लेकिन अभी तक कोई बडशाह नहीं जन्मा। हम सभी विस्थापितों की तरह मजबूर साहब भी उम्मीद का दामन थामे रहे, तमाम नाउम्मीदों के बावजूद शब्दों को अर्थ देते रहे, उनसे अरदास करते रहे "ऐ मेरे शब्दो मुक्त हो जाओ अपनी लघु सीमाओं से, और मेरी कैद से, और मेरी पीड़ा से . . ." कश्मीरी काव्य को समृद्ध विरासत सौंप कर मजबूर साहब अपने हमवतनों की पीड़ा का साझा कर शायद मुक्त हो गए, लेकिन हमारा साहित्य–संसार उनके ऋण से उऋण नहीं हो पाया। उन्हें अपने पाठकों का भरपूर प्यार मिला, कुछ संस्थाओं ने भी उनके योगदान को समझ उन्हें सम्मानित किया, पर बड़ी साहित्य–संस्थाओं ने उन्हें नज़र अंदाज़ ही किया। एक रचनाकार और उनके कृत्तिव की प्रशंसिका होने के नाते उनकी इस उपेक्षा से मुझे तकलीफ होती है। गोकि जानती हूँ मुक्तिबोध और महाप्राण निराला जैसे साहित्य स्तम्भ भी अपने जीवनकाल में लगभग उपेक्षित ही रहे, लेकिन साहित्य के इतिहास में वे भी एक विश्वास सा है कि मजबूर साहब भी अपने रचनात्मक अवदान के कारण कश्मीरी साहित्य में शिखर कवियों में स्थापित हो कर रहेंगे। समय स्वयं उनकी विरासत का मूल्यांकन करेगा।

मेरे लिए उनका आत्मीय आशीष, मेरे स्मृति कोश में ज़िन्दा रहेगा। व्यास सम्मान मिलने पर उन्होंने मुझे आर्शीवाद–स्वरूप एक कविता भेजी थी। एक बड़े साहित्कार के उदार व्यक्तिव और प्रेमिल मन से निकले उद्गार थे वे, जो मैंने सहेज कर रखे हैं। उनमें कुछ शब्द पाठकों के सामने रखने का लोभ संवर नहीं पा रहीः "तमिस यस व्यास दॅय गोमुत, तमिस वाणी म्वखस प्यठ, सरस्वती हुँज़ दया छस स्यठाह, चंदन हारस त् शाहकारस मुबारक।"

ऐसे मुक्त मन के साधक मजबूर साहब को भूलना क्या संभव है????

श्रद्धांजलि

कवि अर्जनदेव मजबूर

महाराज कृष्ण संतोषी

अर्जनदेव मजबूर के बारे में सोचते हुए मुझे हिन्दी कवि केदार नाथ अग्रवाल की ये पंक्तियाँ याद आ रही हैं...

"जियूँगा लिखूंगा

लिखूंगा जियूँगा"

इन पंक्तियों को अर्जुनदेव मजबूर ने जीवन–पर्यंत सार्थक किया, वे उम्र के अंतिम दिनों तक सृजनशील रहे और वृद्धावस्था को उन्होंने कभी अपने ऊपर हावी नहीं होने दिया।

1955 में 'कलामे मजबूर' से अपनी साहित्यिक यात्रा शुरू करते हुए, वे पांच दशकों से भी अधिक समय तक कश्मीरी साहित्य को अपनी रचनाओं से समृद्ध करते रहे, कविता के इतर भी उन्होंने बहुत कुछ लिखा। विशेषकर, वे तहकीकी मज़ामीन जो कश्मीर के इतिहास, उसकी संस्कृति और साहित्यिक वैभव को दर्शाते हैं। लेकिन मजबूर की छवि एक कवि के रूप में ही अधिक प्रतिष्ठित हुई। कविता उनके लिए जीने का वह सम्बल बनी जिसने उन्हें जीवन की उलझनों के बीच भी हताशा से मुक्त रखा। वे जीवन संघर्ष के दो पाटों के बीच भी प्रेम और जिजीविषा के नग्मे गाते रहे। पाब्लो नेरूदा के शब्दों में कहें, "पत्थर पर पानी मेरी ज़िंदगी उत्सव और दायित्व के बीच गाती रही।"

मजबूर में विचारधारा का आग्रह जरूर रहा है, लेकिन मोह नहीं। वे दीनानाथ नादिम के घनिष्ठ सहयोगी रहे, लेकिन मौलिकता में वे अपने काव्य संस्कारों के साथ ही जुड़े रहे। वे नादिम के बराबर कवि न सही लेकिन एक महत्वपूर्ण कवि के रूप में सदा याद किये जायेंगे। मुक्तिबोध ने कभी कहा था, 'दुनिया को साफ़ करने के लिए एक मेहतर चाहिए जो मैं हो नहीं पाता।'

मैं जब भी उनके यहाँ जाता तो उन्हें अपने कमरे में किताबों से घिरे हुए देखता वे किसी पत्रिका के लिए लेख लिख रहे होते या रेडियो के लिए वार्ता या फिर कोई अनुवाद कार्य या पुस्तक समीक्षा... शायद ही मैंने उन्हें घर के सदस्यों के बीच हंसते–बतियाते देखा होगा। उनके लिए स्वर्ग के समान था अपना एकांत और लेखन का कमरा।

कुछ ऐसी ही बात मजबूर ने भी कही है:

'मुझे दो वो शब्द जिनमें सत्यता हो
प्यार हो फूलों की खुशबू हो
मुझे दो निर्मल सुबहें बेदाग संध्याएं
मैं पृथ्वी को उनसे स्वच्छ करना चाहता हूँ।'

कश्मीर से विस्थापित होने के बाद मैं बराबर मजबूर के सम्पर्क में रहा। इस बीच मैं उनकी कर्मठता और लग्न से बखूबी परिचित हो चुका था। मैं जब भी उनके यहाँ जाता तो उन्हें अपने कमरे में किताबों से घिरे हुए देखता। वे किसी पत्रिका के लिए लेख लिख रहे होते या रेडियो के लिए वार्ता या फिर कोई अनुवाद कार्य या पुस्तक समीक्षा... शायद ही मैंने उन्हें घर के सदस्यों के बीच हंसते–बतियाते देखा होगा। उनके लिए स्वर्ग के समान था अपना एकांत और लेखन का कमरा।

फर्श पर बिखरे कागज़–पत्र उनके लेखकीय सरोकारों के प्रतीक थे जिनके सामने नतमस्तक होने को जी करता था।

मजबूर ने बहुत लिखा। उनके यहाँ श्रम और प्रतिभा का अनोखा संयोजन था। पर उनमें रचनात्मक धैर्य का अभाव था। जिसके कारण वे अपनी रचनाओं के परिमार्जन का अवसर खो देते थे। इसका उन्हें नुकसान भी उठाना पड़ा। दरअसल मजबूर एक

अर्जनदेव मजबूर के बारे में सोचते हुए मुझे हिन्दी कवि केदार नाथ अग्रवाल की ये पंक्तियाँ याद आ रही हैं...

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लिखूंगा जियूँगा"

इन पंक्तियों को अर्जुनदेव मजबूर ने जीवन–पर्यंत सार्थक किया, वे उम्र के अंतिम दिनों तक सृजनशील रहे और वृद्धावस्था को उन्होंने कभी अपने ऊपर हावी नहीं होने दिया।

1955 में 'कलामे मजबूर' से अपनी साहित्यिक यात्रा शुरू करते हुए, वे पांच दशकों से भी अधिक समय तक कश्मीरी साहित्य को अपनी रचनाओं से समृद्ध करते रहे, कविता के इतर भी उन्होंने बहुत कुछ लिखा। विशेषकर, वे तहकीकी मज़ामीन जो कश्मीर के इतिहास, उसकी संस्कृति और साहित्यिक वैभव को दर्शाते हैं। लेकिन मजबूर की छवि एक कवि के रूप में ही अधिक प्रतिष्ठित हुई। कविता उनके लिए जीने का वह सम्बल बनी जिसने उन्हें जीवन की उलझनों के बीच भी हताशा से मुक्त रखा। वे जीवन संघर्ष के दो पाटों के बीच भी प्रेम और जिजीविषा के नग्मे गाते रहे। पाब्लो नेरूदा के शब्दों में कहें, "पत्थर पर पानी मेरी ज़िंदगी उत्सव और दायित्व के बीच गाती रही।"

मजबूर में विचारधारा का आग्रह जरूर रहा है, लेकिन मोह नहीं। वे दीनानाथ नादिम के घनिष्ठ सहयोगी रहे, लेकिन मौलिकता में वे अपने काव्य संस्कारों के साथ ही जुड़े रहे। वे नादिम के बराबर कवि न सही लेकिन एक महत्वपूर्ण कवि के रूप में सदा याद किये जायेंगे। मुक्तिबोध ने कभी कहा था, 'दुनिया को साफ़ करने के लिए एक मेहतर चाहिए जो मैं हो नहीं पाता।'

कुछ ऐसी ही बात मजबूर ने भी कही है:

'मुझे दो वो शब्द जिनमें सत्यता हो प्यार हो फूलों की खुशबू हो
मुझे दो निर्मल सुबहें बेदाग संध्याएं
मैं पृथ्वी को उनसे स्वच्छ करना चाहता हूँ।'

कश्मीर से विस्थापित होने के बाद मैं बराबर मजबूर के सम्पर्क में रहा। इस बीच मैं उनकी कर्मठता और लग्न से बखूबी परिचित हो चुका था। मैं जब भी उनके यहाँ जाता तो उन्हें अपने कमरे में किताबों से घिरे हुए देखता वे किसी पत्रिका के लिए लेख लिख रहे होते या रेडियो के लिए वार्ता या फिर कोई अनुवाद कार्य या पुस्तक समीक्षा... शायद ही मैंने उन्हें घर के सदस्यों के बीच हंसते–बतियाते देखा होगा। उनके लिए स्वर्ग के समान था अपना एकांत और लेखन का कमरा।

फर्श पर बिखरे कागज़–पत्र उनके लेखकीय सरोकारों के प्रतीक थे जिनके सामने नतमस्तक होने को जी करता था।

मजबूर ने बहुत लिखा। उनके यहाँ श्रम और प्रतिभा का अनोखा संयोजन था। पर उनमें रचनात्मक धैर्य का अभाव था। जिसके कारण वे अपनी रचनाओं के परिमार्जन का अवसर खो देते थे। इसका उन्हें नुकसान भी उठाना पड़ा। दरअसल मजबूर एक ईमानदार लेखक की तरह जिए जिसने अभिव्यक्ति की कुशलता से ज़्यादा अभिव्यक्ति की सत्यता पर ध्यान दिया। 'पद्य सामयिक' तथा 'त्योल' संग्रह की कविताओं में उन्होंने अपने निर्वासन बोध को बिना लाग–लपेट के अभिव्यक्त किया जो हमारे समय का वह क्रूर सत्य है जिसे अनदेखा नहीं किया जा सकता। बेहतर दुनिया की उम्मीद मजबूर की कविताओं को बल प्रदान करती हैं पर जब उन्हें घाटी से विस्थापित होना पड़ा तो उनका यह सपना टूट गया। और वे कुछ इस तरह महसूस करने लगे:

घेर लेती हैं विसंगतियाँ
जे गहराती जाती हैं
धीरे–धीरे
और सोचता हूँ मैं
कि कभी सत्य
विश्व के सभी देर्शन
सभी नीति–विधान
सभ्यता के महल
संस्कृति के शिखर
क्यों बौने पड़ जाते हैं
एक गोली के सामने

जब यादों की राख उन पर गिरने लगती है तो अपनी छूट गई भूमि की कितनी ही यादें उन्हें सताने लगती हैं। तब वह सौंदर्य बोध को दरकिनार करते हुए चिल्लाता है

"रक्त–भरी घाटी का विदग्ध शरीर

न्हीं देखा जाता अब

कि धुंआ, आग गोलियाँ नहीं हैं संस्कृति मेरी" मजबूर एक सरल स्वभाव सम्पन्न व्यक्ति थे। वे लेखकीय सम्मान के साथ जीना चाहते थे और अंत तक वे इस गौरव के साथ सम्बद्ध रहे। लेख नहीं उनका धर्म था, उनकी प्रार्थना थी और पल भर के लिए भी वह लेखन से दूर नहीं रह सकते थे।

मृत्यु से कुछ दिन पूर्व जब मैं और लेखक मित्र श्री अरविन्द गिगू उनके यहाँ गए तो देखा मजबूर साहब बिस्तर पर निचेष्ट लेटे हुए थे। उनकी सांसों के उतार–चढ़ाव से यह बात अयां हो रही थी कि हमारी मातृभाषा कश्मीरी का यह खुशदिल और हरदिल अजीज़ कवि अब ज़्यादा दिन नहीं जियेगा। जब घरवालों ने तनिक जगाकर उन्हें हम दोनों के आने की सूचना दी तो जैसे उनके होंटों पर एक कृतज्ञ मुस्कान प्रकट हुई। अपनी दबी हुई आवाज़ में उन्होंने कहा–' मेरी नई किताब जल्दी आने वाली है।'

यह सुनकर हम दोनों दंग रह गए। उस दिन उनसे हमने लेखक होने का मतलब दुबारा सीखा।

कुदरत ने मजबूर साहब को एक दीर्घ आयु दी थी और तमाम उम्र वे लड़ते रहे कभी अपने अधिकारों के लिए तो कभी अपने सहयोगियों के लिए। उन्हें लोगों का भरपूर प्यार मिला, सम्मान मिला। कई पुरस्कार मिले कुछेक जो मिलने चाहिए थे, पुरस्कार समितियों की राजनीति के कारण नहीं मिले। अर्जनदेव मजबूर को साहित्य अकादमी पुरस्कार मिला होता तो कश्मीरी भाषा और साहित्य को ही गौरव मिला होता। लेकिन जो नहीं मिला उसका क्या गम। मजबूर ने अपने जीवन का उत्स लेखन को ही माना। वे उपनाम से भले ही 'मजबूर' रहे हों लेकिन असल में वे योद्धा थे जो ज़िन्दगी की कोई भी

लड़ाई हारना नहीं चाहते थे। उनके इस जुझारूपन से मैं हमेशा प्रभावित रहा और बारहा चाहा मजबूर पर एक कविता लिखूं। और जब कविता लिखकर उसे मजबूर को सुनाने उनके घर गया तो वे सुनते हुए बीच में मुस्कुराने लगते। इस कविता का अंग्रेजी अनुवाद कश्मीर सेंटिनल के मजबूर अंक में प्रकाशित हुआ है।

यहाँ प्रस्तुत है उसका मूल प्रारूप

जिस आयु में लोग
देह की पीड़ा
और सन्तान की उपेक्षा का
रोना रोते हैं
उसी आयु में
तुम से मिल कर
ऐसे लगता है
जैसे कोई घुड़सवार
किसी जोखिम भरी यात्रा पर
निकलने सें पूर्व
अपने घोड़े की ज़ीन कस रहा हो
शब्द
अर्थ
और लय की दिशा में भटकने वाले
ए ज़िन्दगी के घुड़सवार
तुमसे मिल कर
अगर कोई तुम्हारी आयु पूछे
लानत उस पर
जिस आयु में
बजने लगती हैं
कानों में काल की घंटियाँ
और आँखों में उतरने लगती है
परलोक की छाया
उसी आयु में तुम पूछते हो
'क्या ईश्वर सचमुच है ?'
अच्छा लगता है
तुम जैसे कवि को देखना
सुनना और यह सोचना
कि कवि होना
सृष्टि का सबसे बड़ा पुरस्कार है

भाषा

कश्मीर में बेगानी कश्मीरी

जवाहरलाल कौल

अपने बेटे के विवाह समारोह का निमंत्रण पत्र पाने के पश्चात मेरी जान–पहचान की एक महिला श्रीमती जयंती पंत ने कहा कि आप की भाषा तो मैंने लगभग पूरी तरह समझ ली। मैंने पूछा कैसे तो जवाब मिला कि इसमें कौन सी बात है प्राकृत–अपभ्रंश तो मैं काफी कुछ समझती हूं। निमंत्रण पत्र मैंने दो भाषाओं में छापा था, कश्मीरी और अंग्रेजी। स्वर्गीय जयंती जी की शिक्षा–दीक्षा शांति निकेतन में हुई थी और उनके दावे को नज़रअंदाज़ नहीं किया जा सकता था। मुझे आश्चर्य इस बात पर हो रहा था कि जो बात मुझ जैसे कश्मीरी भाषी को सहज रूप से मालूम होनी चाहिए थी उसे सुनकर मैं चौंक गया। यह बात केवल मुझ पर ही नहीं लागू होती मेरी आयु और मुझसे कम उम्र के अधिकतर कश्मीरियों के लिए भी सच है। अचानक मुझे याद आया कि मेरे बचपन में मेरे गांवों में किस प्रकार की कश्मीरी बोली जाती थी। मेरा गांव दूर–देहात नहीं है, श्रीनगर से बीस ही मील दूर मानसबल झील के किनारे पर स्थित है। इसलिए कहीं से भी बदलते हुए वातावरण से कटा हुआ नहीं था। याद करते ही कुछ वाक्यों की रचना अपने आप मन में हुई। गछव वन, तति अनव पन त काठ, अति छिय ,,,,????? । अगर प्रसंग की जानकारी हो तो संस्कृत की थोड़ी–बहुत जानकारी रखने वाल व्यक्ति के लिए इन वाक्यों को समझना कोई कठिन काम नही, जैसे जयंती पंत के लिए8 कठिन नहीं था। ऐसा नहीं कि तब कश्मीरी में अरबी–फारसी के शब्द नहीं आए थे। लेकिन वे शासन और प्रशासन या मज़हब से जुड़े शब्द थे जिनका उन विशेष परिस्थितियों का आना स्वाभाविक होता है। भाषाएं कभी ठहरी हुई झीलें नहीं होतीं, बहती हुई नदियां होतीं हैं। इनमें यात्रियों, व्यापारियों, शासकों और धार्मिक प्रचारकों के कारण नए शब्द आ ही जाते हैं। कुछ नए आते हैं तो कुछ परिवर्तित हो जाते हैं। शब्दों का रूप और अर्थ तो घिस–घिस कर भी बदल–बदल जाता है। इसे भाषा का स्वाभाविक प्रवाह या विकास कहा जा सकता है। पठानों और मुगलों के शासन में कई तरह के प्रशासनिक शब्दों का समावेश हो चुका था। अधिकतर शब्द भूमि और कृषिकर्म से जुड़े थे। ज़मीन, जायदाद, काश्त, लगान, देह, शहर, इंतिकाल, इंदराज, के बावजूद धानि (धान्य) कुलगाम, वोछ़ (वत्स, बछड़ा), द्वद (दूध), 'ग्यव (घी) और फल' भाषा के मूलाधार को बताने के लिए उपस्थित थे। सरकारी पैमाइश भले ही मन में हो गई थी, आम–जन के लिए खार (खारिं) ही मान्य माप थी।

कश्मीरी भाषा के मूल स्रोत के बारे में अब तक बहस जारी है कि वह संस्कृत परिवार की भाषा है कि नहीं। यह बहस इसलिए चल रही है कि कश्मीरी के बारे में साम्प्रदायिक बहस से आगे जाकर बहुत कम गंभीर शोध हुआ है जितना कुछ हुआ भी है उसको भी राजनैतिक कारणों से नज़रअंदाज़ किया जाता रहा है।

कश्मीरी भाषा के मूल स्रोत के बारे में अब तक बहस जारी है कि वह संस्कृत परिवार की भाषा है कि नहीं। यह बहस इसलिए चल रही है कि कश्मीरी के बारे में साम्प्रदायिक बहस से आगे जाकर बहुत कम गंभीर शोध हुआ है जितना कुछ हुआ भी है उसको भी राजनैतिक कारणों से नज़रअंदाज़ किया जाता रहा है। संस्कृत मूल के पक्षधर और उसके विरोधी, दोनों एक बात में सहमत लगते हैं कि कश्मीरी

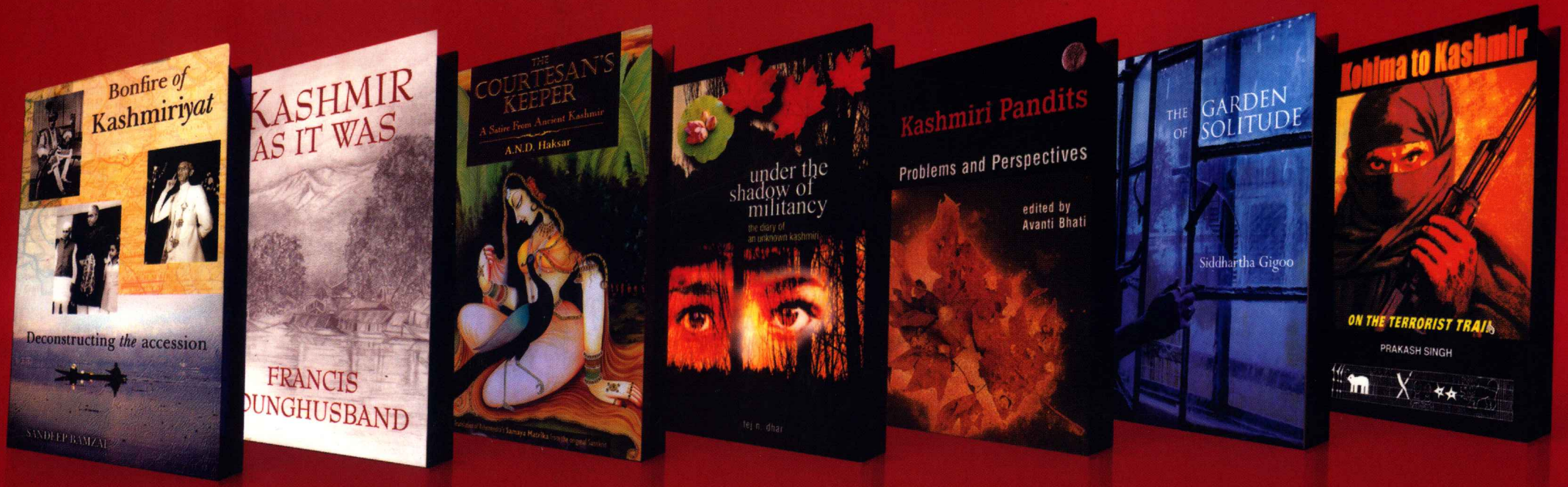
का दारदी भाषा के साथ गहरा रिश्ता रहा है। हलांकि कश्मीरी और कश्मीरियों का भारतीय मूल नकारने के जुनून में एक प्रोफेसर साहब इसके मध्य–एशियाई मूल को साबित करने के लिए तर्कहीनता की सारी सीमाएं लांघ गए हैं। ऐसे अपवादों को मनोरंजन की कोटि में रखते हुए अगर हम यह मान लें कि दारदी और कश्मीरी के प्राचीन रिश्ते रहे हैं तो भी इस आधार पर कश्मीरी को संस्कृत से अलग नहीं किया जा सकता है। ग्रियरसन, जिन्होंने न तो कश्मीरी का पर्याप्त अध्ययन किया था और न ही उन्हें प्राकृत और अपभ्रंश भाषाओं के विकास की पर्याप्त समझ थी, यह नहीं जान पाए कि दारदी अपने आप में भी संस्कृत मूल की ही भाषा है। दारदी के जो रूप अब तक पाकिस्तान और अफगानिस्तान के दूर–दराज़ सीमावर्ती इलाकों में बचे हैं उनमें अब भी इसके प्रमाण मौजूद हैं। गहन अनुसंधान के बिना दारदी और कश्मीरी के रिश्तों से इतना ही नतीजा निकाला जा सकता है कि ये दोनों भाषाएं अपनी आरंभिक विकास–यात्रा में सहचरी रही हैं और दोनों ने इस दौर में आसपास की बोलियों से कुछ ऐसे शब्द भी प्राप्त किए होगें जिनका मूल हमें संस्कृत में नहीं मिलता। फिर भी बीसवीं सदी के आरंभ तक भी कश्मीरी अपने मौलिक स्वरूप को बनाए रखने में सफल रही। यही बात दारदी बोलियों के बारे में भी सच है जिनमें इस्लामीकरण के बाद भी अपने मौलिक तत्व बचे रहे। महत्वपूर्ण है कि कश्मीरी में विदेशी भाषाओं के प्रभाव की जो गति मुस्लिम शासन के पहले आठ सौ सालों में रही उससे अधिक केवल पिछले सौ सालों में रही और सौ वर्ष की इस अवधि में भी भारत की स्वतंत्रता के पश्चात पच्चास वर्ष का कालखंड तो कश्मीरी भाषा में असाधारण प्रत्यारोपन का समय रहा है, जिसमें न केवल योजनाबद्ध तरीके से भाषा को अपने मूल से हटाने और उसमें ऐसे शब्द और मुहावरे आरोपित करने का व्यापक कार्यक्रम चलाया गया जिनसे कश्मीरी की असली पहचान ही कठिन हो जाए।

जिस स्थिति में कश्मीरी को योजनाबद्ध रूप में बरबादी की ओर ले जाया जा रहा है उससे यही लगता है कि लोग कश्मीरी से मुक्ति ही चाहते हैं, तभी तो उसे धीरे–धीरे सार्वजनिक जीवन – प्रशासनिक, वित्तीय, वैज्ञानिक क्षेत्रों – से बहिष्कृत किया जा रहा है और उर्दू को लोगों पर थोपा जा रहा है। उर्दू को कश्मीरी पर इस हद तक प्राथमिकता दी जाती है कि लोग लोकप्रिय शब्दों को भी भूलते जा रहे हैं।

पहचान बिगाड़ने की यह मुहिम केवल भाषा के स्वभाविक चरित्र को नष्ट करने तक ही सीमित नहीं थी अपितु स्थानों के नाम भी इस तरह बदले जाने लगे कि वे अपने इतिहास से कट जाएं। श्रीनगर का सिरीनगर होना एक स्वाभाविक प्रक्रिया है और उसी तरह अवंतिपुर को लागों का वूंत्यपोर कहना भी, लेकिन अनंतनाग को इस्लामाबाद घोषित करना प्रायोजित प्रत्यारोपन ही है। लेकिन इस अभियान का सबसे कुटिल और प्रतिशोधात्मक पहलू तो कश्मीरी की लिपि के बारे में है। कश्मीरी की सही लिपि विकसित करने का अवसर शायद राजनैतिक उथल–पुथल के कारण यहां के लोगों को नहीं मिला। लेकिन कश्मीरी के लिए सबसे निकट और अनुकूल लिपि बनने की क्षमता है शारदा में। गुरमुखी और वर्तमान तिब्बती का आधार भी यही शारदा लिपि ही है। लकिन क्योंकि शारदा संस्कृत भाषा परिवार की लिपि थी और इससे कश्मीरी का अपनी प्राचीन ज़मीन से गहरा रिश्ता पुर्नस्थापित होने की संभावना थी इसलिए उसकी उपयोगिता को दरकिनार करके फारसी–अरबी लिपियों के दायरे में ही हल खोजने की बेकार कोशिश होने लगी। एक कामचलाऊ लिपि गढ़ भी ली गई, लेकिन कुछ सालों तक स्कूलों में पढ़ाने के बाद छात्रों और अभिभावकों ने ही नहीं, अध्यायपकों ने भी हाथ खड़े करके इससे किनारा कर लिया। कश्मीरी साहित्य और प्रकाशन को भारी क्षति होने के बावजूद यह हठ जारी है। कश्मीरी पर उर्दू सवार हो गई और आज कश्मीरी एकमात्र प्रादेशिक भाषा है जिसमें कोई प्रशासनिक, वैज्ञानिक या वित्तीय काम नहीं होता और वह प्राचीन विकसित भाषा होने के बावजूद एक बोली बनकर रह गई है।

सवाल उठता है कि क्या कश्मीर घाटी के लोग अपनी भाषा से प्यार नहीं करते। जिस स्थिति में कश्मीरी को योजनाबद्ध रूप में बरबादी की ओर ले जाया जा रहा है उससे यही लगता है कि लोग कश्मीरी से मुक्ति ही चाहते हैं, तभी तो उसे धीरे–धीरे सार्वजनिक जीवन – प्रशासनिक, वित्तीय, वैज्ञानिक क्षेत्रों – से बहिष्कृत किया जा रहा है और उर्दू को लोगों पर थोपा जा रहा है। उर्दू को कश्मीरी पर इस हद तक प्राथमिकता दी जाती है कि लोग लोकप्रिय शब्दों को भी भूलते जा रहे हैं। कश्मीरी खार के बदले अब इसके उर्दू रूप खिरवार और व्यथ के बदले झेलम को ही आम बोलचाल में प्रचलित करवा दिया गया है। कश्मीरी नाममात्र के लिए ही राज्य की सरकारी भाषा है। कश्मीरी भविष्य में भी अपने बूते पर राज्य की भाषा न बन पाए इसके लिए उसका स्वरूप ही बिगाड़ दिया गया है। फिर कश्मीरियत का नारा देकर आंदोलन चलाने वाले किस कश्मीर की बात कर रहे हैं? यह तो सब जानते हैं कि उनकी कश्मीरियत से मतलब हर तरह की भारतीयता से मुक्त कश्मीर है जिसमें गैर–मुस्लिम कश्मीरी लोग भी शामिल न रहें, लेकिन ऐसा लगता है कि कश्मीरी के इतिहास , साहित्य के साथ वे उसकी पुश्तैनी भाषा को भी कुर्बान करने पर तुले हुए हैं। इस कश्मीरियत का कश्मीर से कोई वास्ता नहीं है, यह तो उस अंतर्राष्ट्रीय वहाबी इस्लामी अभियान का ही नारा है जिसमें वह सब बातें या परंपराएं गुनाह हैं जो इस्लाम की उस धारणा से मेल नहीं खातीं। इसलिए कश्मीरी भाषा को बचाए रखने का उत्तरदायित्व भी उन कश्मीरियों के ऊपर ही आता है जो अपने इतिहास, अपनी संस्कृति और जीवन शैली की बलि चढ़ाने के लिए तैयार न होने के कारण निर्वासन का दण्ड भोग रहे हैं। इस धरोहर को संभालना हमारी नियति है और कर्तव्य भी।

WANT KASHMIR ?



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